BURIED TREASURES

Buried Treasures

THE POWER OF POLITICAL FAIRY TALES

JACK ZIPES

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In memory of my two great friends
Eric Weitz and C. K. Williams

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Jack Zipes
June 7, 2022

PREFACE

MANY PEOPLE CONSIDER old books of fairy tales quaint and old-fashioned: nice to look at, briefly, with children and with a touch of nostalgia. Yet there is something more to such tales than our longing for past, idyllic times: we know, deep down, that fairy-tale books should not be left to molder. These dazzling and unfathomable tales breathe hope through words and images that wishes and daydreams can be realized. If we let them, they can transport us to alternative worlds where social justice, not dictatorship, dominates. It is in the forests of alternative worlds that we are free to determine our own destinies. It is there that tyrants receive their just punishments, and people celebrate—not just children, who expect a happy ending, but readers of all ages who want resolution and recovery, who want to discover themselves with the help of the tales.

Fairy tales reveal what we lack and what we can become. Their endings are our beginnings. They are literally alternative worlds in which ethics and morals in our so-called real worlds are tested. To those people who think fairy tales are nothing but foolish and trivial stories for kids, there is no hope, for it is through our experience of imaginary worlds that we can create sound and grounded strategies not only for survival but also for enlightenment. The tales tell us that we small people must learn to outsmart the villains of this earth. Fairy tales rarely favor nasty kings and queens. Many question elitism, gender roles, and the maltreatment of animals and the natural world. They show us how to open our eyes and

cooperate with other living things to survive and bring about a more humane world.

Not all fairy tales can shine, of course, and not all can enlighten us. In fact, there is no such thing as a standard fairy tale or a pure literary or oral genre, even though academics often believe that they can categorize anything and everything through theories and definitions. What we know for certain is that diverse tales emanated thousands of years ago from oral traditions, and these shared stories sought to explain the mysteries and magic of existence: why we are here and where we are going. Some of the tales marked and were marked by rituals. Some storytellers endeavored to gain power through didactic and religious tales, while others refused to allow the magic of existence to be packaged in organized belief systems.

I am still amazed by the exhilarating secular, existential fairy tales—told in oral, written, and visual form—that compel us to think about the mysteries of life and to question the dominant civilizing process that exploits our talents instead of sharing them. I do not want to exaggerate the importance of fairy tales, nor do I think all are relevant or informative by nature. Given the universal commodification of culture, it is a miracle that meaningful fairy tales still exist. What I do believe is that numerous writers, illustrators, translators, and collectors of fairy tales from the past two centuries have not been given their due. This is why I have spent my retirement years, which began in 2008, publishing unique collections of tales by authors and artists who have purposely used their remarkable talents to confront the forces that have exploited the work and fruits of people who have been trampled upon and overlooked—the small people in fairy tales that are not really "fairy" tales because the fairies gave up on humans years ago. We have been left to ourselves.

It is often fascinating for me to draw connections among authors and their fairy-tale books, especially those from the twentieth century that I have discovered in libraries, flea markets, used bookstores, and internet searches. The results of my curiosity and passion for fairy-tale books have led me to write introductions or afterwords

to those that I have translated, adapted, or edited. Since my essays are all serendipitously connected, I have brought many of them together in this book to demonstrate the profound and different qualities of the tales. Moreover, I want to show how explosive and relevant these tales still are. Most of the authors and illustrators—Édouard Laboulaye (1811–1883), Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948), Béla Balázs (1884–1949), Christian Bärmann (1881–1924), Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), Mariette Lydis (1887–1970), Paul Vaillant-Couturier (1892–1937), Hermynia Zur Mühlen (1883–1951), Lisa Tetzner (1894–1963), Felix Salten (1869–1945), Dorothy Burroughes (1883–1963), Emery Kelen (1896–1978), Romer Wilson (1891–1930), Rolf Brandt (1906–1986), Maurice Druon (1918–2009), and Gianni Rodari (1920–1980)—have a great deal in common. They all lived through revolutions and world wars during the twentieth century. They were all marginalized—left out, deleted—during fascist times. They all became survivors with a mission. Indeed, they wrote and created in the hope that we would be inspired to build upon their wondrous tales and images. Their works are not dead, and I believe my essays about their works demonstrate that it is often beneficial to go back in history to learn how to move forward with a pragmatically utopian perspective.

There is no doubt in my mind that the works of these writers and artists remain highly relevant today, and we might learn a lesson or two by rereading and republishing them. Laboulaye was an eminent jurist who fought against the decadent Napoleon III and wrote unusual feminist tales and political narratives that touch upon issues of oppression and authoritarianism. Many of his tales were based on oral narratives from countries throughout the world. The American Charles Godfrey Leland traveled all over the western world to gather magical, otherworldly folk tales that he recorded and published. Kurt Schwitters, an eccentric revolutionary painter and performer in cabarets, also wrote topsy-turvy political stories that questioned "normal" culture and the banality of life. As an antifascist in Germany, he fled to Norway and then

England, where he continued painting and writing in opposition to fascism.

Béla Balázs was a highly versatile writer of poems, plays, and stories. After he participated in the failed Hungarian Revolution in 1919, he fled to Vienna, where he was hired at one point to create Chinese stories to match Mariette Lydis's Asian paintings. In the 1920s, he moved to Berlin, where he wrote his own tales and collaborated with Lisa Tetzner to write a play about a boy who travels throughout the world on the back of a magic rabbit to learn about injustice and resistance to dictators. Christian Bärmann wrote and illustrated three unusual books for children that celebrated friendship. Ernst Bloch, the pugnacious philosopher of hope, envisioned how fairy tales included possibilities for the creation of more humane relations among people of all kinds.

Mariette Lydis, an Austrian Jew, left Vienna after World War I and became a celebrated experimental painter in France and later Argentina. Most of her paintings focused on people living in poverty, unconventional women and men, and the disastrous conflicts of her times.

Paul Vaillant-Couturier, a Bohemian poet, fought in World War I for France, then rebelled against the French government and became one of the founders of the Communist Party in France. His famous story for children, *Johnny Breadless*, reveals the horrors of war, but also the hope that they can be overcome. His novel formed the basis of Tetzner and Balázs's play *Hans Urian: A Story about a Trip around the World*.

Hermynia Zur Mühlen was also a critic of war and decided to abandon her aristocratic Austrian family to write numerous political fairy tales for children. She escaped the Nazis in 1933 and spent the 1940s in England, criticizing fascism and the Nazis through new stories and radio programs. Lisa Tetzner also published antifascist stories when she fled the Nazis and lived in Switzerland. After the war, she continued to write socially significant tales for German children.

Felix Salten was an Austro-Hungarian Jew who became one of the foremost, prolific journalists and writers of his times in Austria and Germany. He is best known for his novel *Bambi*, a story about the killing of animals that anticipated the killing of European Jews. He published numerous other animal stories and works of fantasy after fleeing the Nazis in 1938. Though Salten proclaimed a great love for animals, the real defender of animal rights was the British artist Dorothy Burroughes, who wrote and illustrated more and much better animal stories for children during the 1930s and 1940s in Great Britain. Her books revealed that animals are more humane than humans.

Emery Kelen, another Hungarian Jew, was a gifted caricaturist who worked for the League of Nations during the 1920s and 1930s. After he fled to America in 1938, he worked for the United Nations and wrote and illustrated unusual political tales for children. Similar to Burroughes, Kelen drew extraordinary animals and poked fun at bureaucratic politicians. Yet it is clear that he was a passionate critic of war and fascism in all his fictional works.

Romer Wilson's novels after World War I were among the first to show how shallow society had become. Her greatest contribution to literature, however, was her three anthologies of fairy tales, *Green Magic* (1928), *Silver Magic* (1929), and *Red Magic* (1930). It is clear from her dedication to children that Wilson intended the tales to create a better understanding among the young not only in the United Kingdom but also in other countries. The brilliant surrealist painter Rolf Brandt also had a great concern for the future of children, which can be seen in the fairy tales he illustrated and wrote in the 1940s.

After World War II, Maurice Druon, a famous writer of historical novels, turned to children in his delightful fairy tale *Tistou, the Boy with Green Thumbs of Peace* and showed how they could upset the conservative world order. During World War II, Druon had been a member of the French Resistance and sought to bring about a more democratic France and Europe. His unique environmental

novel is one of the first to encourage young readers to protect the environment from destruction.

Peace was also a key theme in the Italian Gianni Rodari's witing. A teacher until he took part in the resistance to Mussolini and Hitler, he joined the Communist Party and became a political journalist. Then he turned toward writing for children with the hope that he might help them change the world. Considered the most important Italian writer for children in the twentieth century, his philosophical and comical tales, novels, and poetry are colorful and inspire young and old to think outside the box. In fact, it is from this radical utopian perspective that all the neglected and nonconformist writers and artists I have mentioned, including the philosopher Ernst Bloch, sought to change the world.

The essays in this book only scratch the surface of forgotten books for young and old from the western world during the past two centuries. I am certain that other parts of the world have buried books that need to be unburied.

BURIED TREASURES

1

Unburying Buried Fairy Tales

ADVENTURES OF A SCHOLARLY SCAVENGER

Ivan flies to conquer the tsar. (Illustrator unknown.)

ONCE UPON A TIME, when the famous scientist Albert Einstein worked at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, a tiny old woman approached him as he was walking home. She was schlepping a skinny young boy of about six who was dragging his feet.

"Meester Einstein," she called out in a strong Central European accent. "Meester Einstein, stop your tracks and help me!"

Einstein was taken aback. He didn't know what to do except stop.

"How can I help you?" he responded with a smile as he took out a pipe.

"Meester Einstein, stop. You shouldn't smoke. It will kill you," the old woman said.

Again, Einstein was taken aback, and he put away his pipe.

"Is that better?"

"Much better," the old woman said as she drew her timid grandson toward Einstein. "Jaky, stop fiddling and listen to this great man."

Now she turned her attention back to Einstein.

"Meester Einstein, I want you should tell me what my grandson must do to become educated like you. I want he should be a great scientist."

Einstein didn't hesitate with his reply. "Fairy tales. He should read fairy tales."

"All right," the woman replied. "But what then? What should he read after that?"

"More fairy tales," Einstein stated bluntly. He took out his pipe and continued walking toward his home.

The old woman was silent for a moment, but then she grabbed hold of Jaky's hand and began dragging him through the park again. Suddenly, she stopped.

"You heard, Jaky!" She pointed her finger at the frightened boy. "You heard what the great man said! Read fairy tales! Do what the man said, or God help you!"

And she whisked her grandson away.

This is a "true" tall tale, not a fairy tale. I must confess that the boy in this preposterous anecdote was me, and I have lived under Einstein's spell ever since my momentous encounter with the great man in 1943. Or perhaps one could call the spell my grandmother's curse. Whether spell or curse, I can't recall not imbibing fairy tales.

They are in my blood. Ever since my grandmother made her fateful introduction, I have constantly collected fairy tales, read them, written them, studied them, and even lived them. My wife thinks I am like the golden boy of fairy tales—that is, she thinks that Lady Fortuna watches over me and changes everything I touch into gold. She also thinks that I'm a fairy-tale junkie. Addicted. For years, I have spent most of my research time at library sales, auctions, flea markets, garbage dumps, and garage sales and in secondhand bookstores, musty libraries, book stalls, movie theaters, cellars, attics, and museums. My daughter, who has tolerated my tale-telling and fairy-tale obsession since she was born, has offered to ship me off and pay for a fairy-tale detox program run by rational, stringent, down-to-earth social workers. Lately, however, she has concluded that I'm hopeless and helpless.

I may be helpless, but I'm not hopeless. The hope embedded in fairy tales has driven me throughout my life, and perhaps it is hope that drove Einstein. There is something peculiar about fairy tales, the best of fairy tales, that propels me. Moreover, I am not alone: I have learned about the complexities of life through these wonder narratives, and especially through buried treasures that I have discovered and decided to share with interested readers. But before I talk about these fairy-tale treasures, I want to theorize a bit about why we cannot do without fairy-tale narratives and art, and why my obsession with fairy tales might be a sane response to a sick world.

Recently, I have become interested in the science of the brain and its ability to store and disseminate all sorts of tales. As Jerome Bruner, the renowned psychologist, has remarked:

> We live in a sea of stories, and like the fish who (according to the proverb) will be the last to discover water, we have our own difficulty grasping what it is like to swim in stories. It is not that we lack competence in creating our narrative accounts of reality—far from it. We are, if anything, too expert. Our problem, rather, is achieving consciousness of what we so easily do automatically, the ancient problem of *prise de conscience.*[1]

In short, Bruner wants to understand the process of human cognition, how we tell tales to make sense of the world, and how we become aware of ourselves and our environment. As we know, human cognition is the result of mental activity of the brain (a module, a faculty, a capability) that processes experience through seeing, listening, and touching. It is knowledge based on familiarity with the environment and social relations. Cognition is formed through a process of thought embodied in individuals. The cognitive faculty of the brain is the nodal point for the gathering and exchange of information and for the application of the knowledge gathered in different situations. Cognition or cognitive processes can be natural or artificial, conscious and unconscious. The concept of cognition varies in different fields such as psychology, linguistics, philosophy, neurology, and so on. We recognize and know the world through experience, especially through the brain. As Paul Armstrong has astutely demonstrated, the brain enables us to become conscious of the meaning of stories.[2] We know the world through human communication based on cooperation. We do not know the world alone. We touch and are touched by other humans and by our environments.

In *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, Michael Tomasello has written:

> Individual human beings are able to create culturally significant artifacts only if they receive significant amounts of assistance from other human beings and social institutions. . . . Broadly speaking, cultural transmission is a moderately common evolutionary process that enables individual organisms to save much time and effort, not to mention risk, by exploiting the already existing knowledge and skills of conspecifics.[3]

By "conspecifics," Tomasello means other human beings with whom we share a particular environment. To adapt to the environment, human beings are able to pool their cognitive resources in ways that other animal species are not, through imitative learning, instructed learning, and collaborative learning. These learning

processes begin when children are in their infancy, as early as nine months, when they realize that other human beings have intentions. Children must then contend with these intentions and learn from them. Here linguistic symbols are extremely important because they "embody the ways that previous generations have found it useful to categorize and construe the world for purposes of interpersonal communication."[4]

As Tomasello maintains, "Language is a form of cognition; it is packaged for the purposes of interpersonal communication. Human beings want to share experience with one another and so, over time, they have created symbolic conventions for doing that. . . . Given that the major function of language is to manipulate the attention of other persons—that is, to induce them to take a certain perspective on a phenomenon—we can think of linguistic symbols and constructions as nothing other than symbolic artifacts that a child's forbears have bequeathed to her for this purpose. In learning to use these symbolic artifacts, and thus internalizing the perspectives behind them, the child comes to conceptualize the world in the way that the creators of the artifacts did."[5]

Tomasello's ideas about human communication and human cognition have been influenced to a certain extent by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's highly significant book, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). They maintain:

> A great deal of everyday, conventional language is metaphorical, and the metaphorical meanings are given by conceptual metaphorical mappings that ultimately arise from correlations in our embodied experience. . . . In short, metaphor is a natural phenomenon. Conceptual metaphor is a natural part of human thought, and linguistic metaphor is a natural part of human language. Moreover, which metaphors we have and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices. Every question about the nature of conceptual metaphor and its role in thought and language is an empirical question.[6]

As a narrative metaphor or metaphorical pattern, a fairy tale, like other short narratives—anecdotes, jokes, legends, myths, warning tales, and so on—stems from historically conditioned lived experience that fosters a reaction in our brains, and this experience is articulated through symbols that endow it with significance. Fairy tales are relevant because they pass on information vital for human adaptation to changing environments. I do not want to privilege the fairy tale, or more precisely, the oral wonder tale as the only type of narrative or the best means by which we communicate our experiences and learn from one another. But it does seem to me that the fairy tale offers a metaphorical means through which we can gain distance from our experiences, sort them out, and articulate or enunciate their significance for us and for other people in our environment.

Over thousands of years, fairy tales have come to form a linguistic type, a genre, a means by which we seek to understand and contend with our environment, to find our place in it. There are many types, genres, and means of narration. Our predilection for certain fairy tales reveals something about ourselves and our cultures. Every family and society in the world has developed types, genres, and communicative means that produce cultural patterns and enable people to identify themselves and grasp the world around them. Sometimes these communicative means or media have contributed to the formation of spectacles and illusions that prevent us from understanding our empirical experiences. Some critics have proposed that cultural industries have formed, and these industries systematically obfuscate or cloud our vision of the world and generate metaphors that do not lead to cognition or an understanding of how societies function. We live in a conflicted world, a world filled with conflicts, and fairy tales can be used by all of us for enlightenment or abused by small groups of powerful people who seek domination.

In my own life, I have been both a scholar of fairy tales and an opportunistic scavenger. According to the *Oxford Universal Dictionary*, a scavenger in 1503 was "an officer whose duty was to take

(to 'scavage'), that is, to take tolls and later to keep the streets clean. It was a person whose employment was to clean streets by scraping or sweeping together and removing dirt. One who collects filth; one who does dirty work. A scavenger is also a collector of junk and one who labors for the removal of public evils."[7] Some philosophers have claimed that we can learn more about a society by collecting and studying its refuse than by collecting and studying its fine art and accomplishments. There is a great deal of truth to that proposition, and I like to consider myself as a scavenger who unearths discarded and forgotten tales that speak to crucial questions of human struggles and social conflicts. I like to collect buried tales that contain gems filled with hope and that illuminate a path to a better world. Ever since I was young, I have been an excavator as well as a scavenger—digging for inspiring tales that shed light on the human condition and penetrate the illusions of the society of the spectacle. Like a fairy-tale hero, quite often the little underdog, I have learned to grab hold of opportunities and make the most of them. Addicted as I am, I follow each and every clue to link the fairy tales to one another and to the lives of forgotten storytellers and artists—people and tales living on the edge of societies, in the nooks and crannies. I travel widely, learn different languages, meet all kinds of people, and their creations excite my curiosity and keep me wondering about serendipity in my life—how we all need serendipity.

My scholarly work has always stemmed from the side of me that has questioned what I am doing and why. Fortunately, this critical side has led me to appreciate and analyze the virtues of the discarded, the marginal, and the dispossessed that, for me, are buried treasures.

My scavenger and excavation work began in earnest in the late 1970s, when I was writing a critical study called *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Around that time, I read and was revolted by Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment,* which really should be called the misuses of enchantment, and sheds light on the weaknesses of psychology and psychiatry.

My exposure to Bettelheim, and also to Freud, led me to conduct storytelling in public schools to test his and my own theories of how children relate to fairy tales. Aside from exploring how children react to, comprehend, and use traditional fairy tales, I wanted to introduce children to variants of the classical tales and compare their different perspectives on these tales. The storytelling project also led me to a research project: to gather as many versions and variants of "Little Red Riding Hood" as I could to see whether Bettelheim's pseudo-Freudian interpretation of the tale—which, for him, represented a simplistic oedipal conflict—held any water compared to my approach, which viewed the tale as one about rape, in which girls are explicitly declared responsible for their own violation. In this case, it is important to bear in mind that Perrault ended his "classical" version of the tale by insisting that little girls who invite wolves into their parlors deserve what they get!

My scavenging and excavating eventually led me to produce *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1983), in which I published thirty-five different versions of the tale type from the seven hundred or more that I had collected and continue to collect.[8] Important for me in my comparative study were the buried treasures—that is, the neglected fairy tales that demonstrated different modes of storytelling and suggested alternatives to Red Riding Hood's struggle with her violator. Two of the tales that struck me most, especially because I used them in my role as storyteller with children and adults, were Catherine Storr's "Little Polly Riding Hood" (1955) and Gianni Rodari's "Little Green Riding Hood" (1973). Both had been unknown to me and the American reading public, as were a good many other "Red Riding Hood" versions published in my book.

Catherine Storr (1913–2001) is not well known in North America. She worked as a psychologist from 1948 until 1962 and then devoted herself full-time to writing while also working as an editor for Penguin Books. A prodigious writer, she was an early feminist and wrote four popular books in the UK about Polly and the

wolf, beginning with *Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf* (1955) and concluding with *Last Stories of Polly and the Wolf* (1990). All her fairy tales in these volumes are innovative revisions of "Little Red Riding Hood," and they follow the same plot line by demonstrating how brilliantly Polly escapes the predatory wolf. It is because the wolf follows the plot laid out by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm that he stumbles and reveals himself as a buffoon. Storr's play with narrative conventions and cultural expectations transforms the tales into subtle learning games that show how anachronistic views of gender and domination are not applicable in today's real world. I was so fond of "Little Polly Riding Hood" that I republished it in my collection *The Outspoken Princess and the Gentle Knight* (1994), which was illustrated by the wonderfully subversive Canadian artist Stephane Poulin. Incidentally, this book contained unique fairy tales, more treasures by Ernest Hemingway, Jack Sendak, Richard Schickel, John Gardner, Lloyd Alexander, and A. S. Byatt among others.

Gianni Rodari's approach in "Little Green Riding Hood" is somewhat different from Storr's, although he, too, wished to stimulate children to play with words and thus with alternatives in their own worlds. "Little Green Riding Hood" reads as follows:

> Once upon a time there was a little girl called Little Yellow Riding Hood.
>
> "No! Red Riding Hood!"
>
> "Oh yes, Red Riding Hood. Well, her mother called her one day and said: 'Listen, Little Green Riding Hood—'"
>
> "No! Red!"
>
> "Oh, yes! Red. 'I want you to go to your aunt Diomira and take her a bunch of these potatoes.'"
>
> "No! You should say: 'Go to Grandma and take her these cakes.'"
>
> "All right. So the little girl went into the woods and met a giraffe."
>
> "You're confusing everything! She met a wolf, not a giraffe!"

"And the wolf asked her: 'What's six times eight?'"

"Not at all! The wolf asked her where she was going."

"You're right. And Little Black Riding Hood replied—"

"It was Little Red Riding Hood. Red, red, red!!!"

"Yes, indeed, and she replied: 'I'm going to the market to buy some tomatoes.'"

"Not in your wildest dreams! She said: 'I'm going to my grandma who's sick, but I don't know my way any longer.'"

"Of course! And the horse said—"

"What horse? It was a wolf."

"Certainly. And this is what it said: 'Take the 75 tram, get out at the main square, turn right, and you'll find three steps with three quarters on them. Leave the steps where they are, but pick up the three quarters, and buy yourself a pack of chewing gum.'"

"Grandpa, you really don't know how to tell stories. You always make mistakes. But all the same, I wouldn't mind buying some chewing gum."

"All right. Here's the money."

And her grandpa turned back to read his newspaper.

Rodari, the foremost writer for children in Italy in the twentieth century, more famous and more gifted than Carlo Collodi (1826–1890), believed that we don't just learn, but also invent and create, from our mistakes. He articulated his profound ideas in a book called *Grammatica della fantasia* (1973), which I translated as *The Grammar of Fantasy* in 1996. Rodari, who had joined the Italian Resistance during World War II, was an avid pacifist, and his ideas and methods have had a profound influence on my work.

Rodari's perspective was very close to that of the 1920s socialists, anarchists, and communists who wrote the tales I collected as *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*.[9] Most of the tales were explicitly written for children to raise and challenge their political consciousness, and none had ever been translated into English before. Some of the writers, such as Kurt Schwitters and Béla

Balázs, were well known, as were illustrators George Grosz and John Heartfield. To give a flavor of the book, here is one short tale by the woefully neglected Danish author Carl Ewald (1856–1908).

A Fairy Tale about God and Kings

Once upon a time the people became so sick and tired of their kings that they decided to send some deputies to God to ask for his help against their monarchs.

The deputies arrived at the gates of heaven and were allowed to enter heaven in turn. But when the speaker of the group presented their case, God shook his head in surprise and said, "I don't understand one word you've said. I never gave you kings."

The entire group began to yell in confusion that the earth was full of kings, all of whom declared that they ruled with God's blessings.

"I don't know a thing about this!" God responded. "I created you all equal. I made you in my image. Good-bye!"

So ended the audience with God. But the deputies sat down in front of the gates of heaven and shed bitter tears. When God learned about this, he took pity on them and let them enter heaven again. Then he summoned an archangel and said, "Get the book in which I listed all of the plagues that were to fall upon human beings if they sinned, and check to see whether I wrote anything about kings there."

The book was very thick, so the angel needed an entire day to complete his task. In the evening, when he was finished, he reported to the Lord that he had found nothing. So the deputies were led before God, who declared, "I don't know a thing about kings. Good-bye!"

The poor deputies became so desperate that God took pity on them once again. And again he summoned the angel and said to him, "Get the books in which I've recorded everything human beings must suffer for their foolish prayers so that they

might learn that my teachings are wiser than theirs. Check to see whether I wrote anything about kings there."

And the angel did as he was commanded. However, he had to read twelve thick books. It took him twelve days to finish the work. And he found nothing. So God granted the deputies an audience for the last time and said, "You'll have to return home without fulfilling your mission. There's nothing I can do for you. Kings are your own invention, and if you're sick and tired of them, then you must find your own way to get rid of them."[10]

I later decided to translate and edit a volume of Kurt Schwitters's fairy tales called *Lucky Hans and Other Merz Fairy Tales* (2009) because the remarkable Schwitters, known primarily as one of the most gifted Dadaist painters of the 1920s and 1930s, also wrote unusual fairy tales that were surrealist and carnivalesque. All the tales were superbly illustrated by the painter/artist Irvine Peacock, who, like Grosz, captured the temper of the 1920s with scurrilous humor. Irony was the hallmark of Schwitters's works, and he also wrote and illustrated three experimental and ironic fairy tales for children between 1922 and 1924.

All I need is a trace or some artifact to send me on an excavation mission. One spark was provided by a literary agent who asked whether I would be interested in translating Sibylle von Olfers's *Etwas von den Wurzelkindern* (Something about the Mandrakes), a 1906 fairy-tale picture book that was popular in Germany but had never received its due recognition in the UK or North America. Upon reading it, I discovered it to be a marvelous book about the relationship of children to nature, as good as, if not better than, *Goodnight Moon*, and I translated it in 2007. This collaboration was unusual because the illustrations are taken from a quilt by Sieglinde Schoen Smith, and the new title, *Mother Earth and Her Children: A Quilted Fairy Tale*, indicates the way I interpreted a tender tale written for children at the beginning of the twentieth century.

More recently, my work on two fairy-tale film books led to some stunning discoveries as I traced the sources of the films to fairy-tale texts—sometimes in translation, sometimes in English—often accompanied by provocative illustrations. Three film adaptations of fairy tales that compelled me to excavate the source materials in one form or another are *The Humpbacked Horse* (1976) directed by the Russian Ivan Ivanov-Vano, *King Lavra* (1948) directed by the Czech Karel Zeman, and *The Fifty-First Dragon* (1954) directed by the American Peter Burness.

The Humpbacked Horse was the first Russian animated feature ever produced, and it was a popular success when it appeared in 1947 and was later remade in 1976. The film's story has deep roots not only in the Russian folk and literary tradition but also in many other cultures. Known by folklorists as tale type ATU 530 "The Clever Horse,"[11] hundreds if not thousands of oral and literary versions and variants exist worldwide. Typically, the plot is based on a combination of tales: "The Godchild of the King and the Unfaithful Companion," "The Golden-Haired Maiden," and "The Clever Horse." A peasant boy, often the youngest of three brothers, goes on a search for a godfather or king. He manages to obtain a magic horse by performing a valorous deed. Along the way, he picks up a glimmering feather or a golden hair against the horse's wishes. When he eventually arrives at the king's court, he is appointed stable boy because he is the only one who can really control the horses. A jealous court official or servant wants to get rid of the peasant boy, who has become a favorite of the king, and falsely reports that the boy boasted he could find the bird that had lost the flaming feather, bring the king a golden-haired maiden to become his bride, and perform other impossible tasks. Despite the immense difficulties of the tasks, the peasant boy accomplishes them with the help of the magic horse. When the princess is captured, she is unwilling to marry the king unless he or the peasant boy is tested by fire, boiling water/milk, or the guillotine. The king demands that the boy submit to the test first, and the magic horse

prevents the boy from being killed. Then the king must prove that he is as valorous as the peasant boy by completing the tests. He fails, however. The princess marries the peasant boy, or the magic horse turns into a princess and weds him.

The great flexibility of "The Clever Horse" tale type's structure, which allows the narrator to use a variety of recognizable motifs, has sparked the imagination of many authors. In 1834, the Russian poet Pyotr Pavolich Yershov (1815–1869) adapted an oral tale and combined it with another Russian folk tale, "Prince Ivan, Firebird and the Grey Wolf," to form his fascinating poem "The Humpbacked Horse," which became famous in his day and is still considered a classical fairy-tale poem in Russia, even though it has been "relegated" to the realm of children's literature.[12] During the nineteenth century, the poem was considered somewhat seditious because it ridicules the tsar, and for a time, it could be published only with certain sections omitted. Arthur Saint-Léon used the poem as the basis of a ballet with music by Cesare Pugni for the Imperial Ballet in 1864, and it has been performed by different companies up through the twenty-first century.

Clearly, "The Humpbacked Horse" is deeply rooted in Russian culture, and thus it was not by chance that Ivanov-Vano (1900–1987) decided to animate it and emphasize its Russian heritage. In the process, he made some important changes, effacing the Christian references, depicting the tsar as a blundering buffoon, and exaggerating the role of chamberlain as vindictive villain. The poem, which Yershov wrote in charming but elevated Russian verse, is transformed in comic-strip style to appeal to young people and is filled with traditional Russian medieval architecture, design, and ornaments to evoke an idyllic past. An interesting English translation of Yershov's poem with illustrations by Nikolai Kochergin published in 1976 offers another traditional Russian perspective on a tale worth telling.

Yet the Czechs have never been outdone by the Russians. Karel Zeman (1910–1989), along with marvelous illustrator and puppeteer Jirí Trnka (1812–1869), was regarded as one of the great Czech

pioneers of animation, and among his fascinating animation and live-action films is *King Lavra* (*Král Lavra*). It is not by chance that Zeman chose to animate the satirical poem "King Lavra," written by Karel Havlicek Borovsky (1821–1856), a teacher and journalist exiled from Czechoslovakia at one point because of his political stance. Dedicated to the liberal national cause of the Czechs, Borovsky was critical of the Russians and the Czech ruling classes; his poem basically mocked them as jackasses. Zeman's adaptation follows the broad outlines of Borovsky's work while making it even more satirical. The narrative concerns a king with donkey ears: ashamed of them, he grows his hair very long. Since he needs a haircut every now and then, he orders a barber to come to the palace. Since each barber who comes inevitably discovers the donkey ears, the king has him beheaded. After his executioner has chopped off nine heads, King Lavra orders yet another barber to give him a haircut. Fortunately, this young barber is working on the executioner's hair when the king's order is sent. The barber quickly ties up the executioner, and after he goes to the king and gives him the haircut, the king cannot have him executed. The king makes the barber swear that he will never tell a soul about the donkey ears. The barber agrees and is given a medal. However, the young man is haunted by the truth and tells the secret to some green twines growing in a field. Later, after some musicians come to the court and there is a celebration, one of the twines that has become a string makes a sound like a donkey, and the king's ears pop out from beneath his crown. Immediately, the king hides under the table. To his surprise, his wealthy party guests clap and pander to him. The king realizes that he need not be ashamed of his ears and returns to the feast at the table. However, he bans the folk musicians, who set off into the countryside. The king wants to include the young barber in the feast and as part of his retinue, but the barber discards his medal of honor and runs off to join the musicians.

Zeman's stop-motion film uses wooden puppets that have tube-like arms and legs, perhaps made from pipe cleaners. They move

brilliantly to classical music throughout the film, and there is absolutely no dialogue. The music determines the rhythms of the puppets' gestures and movements. The facial expressions reveal their thoughts. In America, the tale was adapted and illustrated by Marjorie Auerbach in 1964. If one compares her illustrations with shots from the film, we can see that she was somewhat influenced by Zeman. However, she changed the story so that there is a happy ending. Zeman was much more radical and refused to make compromises with kings—something all the Disney-like American films are glad to do. Zeman implies that the barbers are suffering the fate of those good people who do not resist tyranny. He makes a mockery of authoritarianism, and although the king remains in power at the end, he has been exposed as a jackass, as are the sycophants who applaud him. All this is insufferable for the young barber. Unwilling to collaborate, he joins the folk musicians in the final image, a signal of resistance.

The Fifty-First Dragon, a UPA cartoon, was also a short film of resistance based on a fairy tale of resistance. Directed by Pete Burness (1904–1969) in 1954, it continued the UPA's "antiviolent" and subtle carnivalesque fairy-tale program. (It is important to bear in mind that these films were produced during the McCarthy witch hunt, anticommunist hearings, and the Cold War.) Written by the gifted journalist Heywood Broun (1888–1939) in 1919, soon after World War I, and published in the *New York Tribune*, "The Fifty-First Dragon" begins as follows:

> Of all the pupils at knight school Gawaine le Coeur-Hardy was among the least promising. He was tall and sturdy, but his instructors soon discovered that he lacked spirit. He would hide in the woods when the jousting class was called, although his companions and members of the faculty sought to appeal to his better nature by shouting to him to come out and break his neck like a man. Even when they told him that the lances were padded, the horses no more than ponies and the field unusually soft for late autumn, Gawaine refused to grow enthusiastic. The

> Headmaster and the Assistant Professor of Pleasaunce were discussing the case one spring afternoon and the Assistant Professor could see no remedy but expulsion.
>
> "No," said the Headmaster, as he looked at the purple hills which ringed the school, "I think I'll train him to slay dragons."[13]

Indeed, Gawaine, a mild-mannered and not very bright knight, learns the magic word "Rumplesnitz" to give him confidence, and he becomes an expert killer. He slaughters fifty dragons until he learns that the magic word is not magical at all, and then he becomes fearful. Nevertheless, the Headmaster drags him to the forest so that he will kill his fifty-first dragon, and from that day on, he is never seen again. Though it is clear that he died from fright and that a dragon devoured him, the Headmaster conceals the truth and honors him as a hero.

The drawings in this UPA cartoon are characteristically sparse and depict the major characters and dragons with very little background. The narrator, who recounts Gawaine's transformation, maintains an "objective" subtle tone, as Gawaine becomes a hideous if not craven killer. In unthinkingly serving the school as a killer knight, he becomes a victim of its manipulative practices and is unaware that his glory is false. Although Broun, a socialist, wrote his tale as a commentary on the treatment of American soldiers during World War I, the UPA animators certainly had the Korean War in mind. In 1968, Ed Emberley (b. 1931), one of America's finest artists, produced an illustrated version of Broun's work, undoubtedly to comment on the senselessness of the Vietnam War.

Many of the films based on oral and literary fairy tales deal with tyranny and war. The twentieth century began with an explosion and expansion of wars that have continued into the twenty-first century; endless wars, big and small, on every continent. These wars bring immense distress and darkness with them. Of course, there have been conflicts and wars ever since humans began creating weapons, whether to survive or to exercise power for domination. But as civilization has "progressed," the wars have become more

brutal and barbarian and the effects of efficient weapons and tactics even greater. There is practically no way to prevent these wars, even though most people would prefer not to experience them. Resistance seems almost futile, and if there is recourse, it appears that our only hope is to record and contest warmongers through narratives of many different kinds, to spread tales of resistance.

Fairy tales have never shied away from wars and have posed questions about abusive power, injustice, and exploitation. The very best of them are concerned with profound human struggles and seek to provide hope despite the darkness that surrounds their very creation and production. At the very basis of all fairy tales is the urge to shed light on conflicts that keep tearing at our souls, not to mention tearing up bodies. The worst of fairy-tale films belong to the society of the spectacle and generate illusions that divert us from what we need most: a bit of compassion, illumination, and hope. Compassion for our troubled compatriots, illumination about the causes of our conflicts, hope that we may enjoy epiphanies that deepen the meaning of our lives. The best of fairy tales are, in my opinion, all about compassion, illumination, and hope. What other reason than this do I need to pursue my work as scholarly scavenger?

2

Édouard Laboulaye's Political Fairy Tales

The prince learns a lesson. (Illustration by Mary K. Booth.)

IN THE HAPPY country of fairies, one leaves it only to find one's way back. One suffers only to become happy, whereas pain is for us an enigma and life a struggle without end where the better people are the first to fall. There, in the country of fairies, one does not get old,

> and one always loves. Here, no sooner does our heart barely recover from those foolish acts of our youth than it turns serious and begins to love an object worthy of our heart. Then, our face becomes wrinkled, and our hair turns white leaving us with the feeling of ridicule. There, in the country of fairies, one knows everything in one hour or one day. Here, we pursue truth at the cost of our lives as it evades us. It flees like the marvelous bird, and when, at last, after thirty years of pain, we feel it near us, when our hand lowers to seize it, another hand more powerful freezes us and carries us off to the country from which nobody has ever returned.
>
> —ÉDOUARD LABOULAYE, *CONTES BLEUS* (DECEMBER 20, 1863)

In my research of neglected writers and their collections of folk and fairy tales, I focus on finding and translating into English significant works by foreign authors who have not received the attention they deserve. In both the first edition of *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2000) and the second revised edition (2015), however, I somehow omitted any reference to the fairy tales of the remarkable Édouard Laboulaye (1811–1883). Moreover, I was not the only one to neglect him: almost none of the American and English encyclopedias and handbooks of fairy tales published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries mention Laboulaye. In fact, scarcely a word has been published about his fairy tales in French, nor have modern editions of his fairy tales appeared in either French or English.

Why such neglect when Laboulaye, one of France's foremost jurists and politicians of the nineteenth century, published highly unusual political fairy tales?[1] His production of stories and novels is stunning in its variety. It includes *Contes bleus* (Blue Tales, 1863), *Nouveaux contes bleus* (New Blue Tales, 1868), and *Derniers contes*

bleus (Final Blue Tales, 1884); experimental works of fiction, such as the moralistic novel *Abdallah, ou Le trèfle à quatre feuilles* (Abdallah, or The Four-Leaf Clover, 1859), based on traditional Arabic folk tales; the time-travel fantasy novel *Paris en Amérique* (Paris in America, 1863); and the fairy-tale novel *Le prince caniche* (The Poodle Prince, 1868).

Laboulaye was a great admirer of American democracy, supported the antislavery cause of the North, wrote several books dealing with the history of America and American constitutional law, and played a key role in developing the plans for the Statue of Liberty. Some of his American contemporaries considered him America's greatest friend. John Bigelow, the American ambassador to France in the 1860s, wrote: "Mr. Laboulaye's value as a friend of the Union, and of representative government was not long in being recognized in the United States. The press proclaimed his sympathetic utterances wherever the Federal mails could carry them; the Union League Club of New York ordered his portrait by Fagnani, which now adorns its walls, a bronze bust of him was placed in the Union League Club in Philadelphia, and at the close of our war, his name was more widely and more generally known in the United States than in Europe."[2]

So why isn't Laboulaye better known today in the United States and elsewhere? Why have his many fairy tales gone unnoticed since the beginning of the twentieth century?

Perhaps it was owing to Laboulaye's modesty and humility that his fiction writing never attained a large readership in the United States and Great Britain, despite commendable published translations by Mary K. Booth, editor of *Harper's Bazaar,* and Mary Robinson, a British writer. Perhaps it is because his fairy tales, ostensibly published for and dedicated to children, were actually too sophisticated to be classified as children's literature or to be read by children. Indeed, before being published in books, most of them appeared in the distinguished *Journal des débats* (Journal of Debates) for highly educated readers, who would have noted their political significance.[3] Whatever the case may be, it is time to

reconsider Laboulaye's achievement as a writer of unusually wry fairy tales filled with biting social commentaries, philosophical reflections, and strong notions of social justice.

Born into a renowned bourgeois family in Paris in 1811 during the First Empire, Laboulaye received a classical education at the Collège Louis-le-Grand and the University of Paris School of Law. Instead of practicing as a lawyer after graduating, however, he began working with his brother Charles, who had bought a type foundry in the early 1830s. Although Laboulaye was successful in this business, he had other, more intellectual and political interests. He continued to study and write about comparative jurisprudence and the evolution and history of law. He made trips to Germany to deepen his understanding of social justice, and was influenced by the German historical school of law fostered by Friedrich Carl de Savigny, who played an important role in the education of the Brothers Grimm at the University of Marburg. Savigny's aim was to demonstrate through meticulous historical research that laws were not natural but originated in the customs and practices of the people in a given society, and that these laws changed as people changed their social values. In 1839, under the influence of Savigny, Laboulaye published *Histoire du droit de propriété foncière en Occident* (History of Landed Property in Europe), which was awarded a prize by the Academy of Inscriptions and Belle-Lettres. Three years later, he was received at the bar as a lawyer and in 1849 was appointed professor of comparative law at the Collège de France.

These accomplishments resulted from his pioneering research and publications during this period. In 1840, he published *Essai sur la vie et les ouvrages de Savigny* (The Life and Works of Savigny), which introduced the German scholar's historical and interdisciplinary methods to French scholars. Laboulaye himself applied these methods in his famous book, *Recherches sur la condition civile*

et politique des femmes depuis les Romains jusqu' à nos jours (The Civil and Political Condition of Women from the Time of the Romans to Our Present Days, 1843), and in the significant study *Essai sur les lois criminelles des Romains concernant la responsabilité des magistrats* (Essay on Roman Criminal Laws Concerning the Responsibility of the Magistrates, 1845). These early works reveal Laboulaye's strong democratic inclinations and moral principles, which led him to support the revolution of 1848 but not the violent overthrow of the monarchy. Yet Laboulaye, who had not been an active politician, felt that the turbulence caused by the revolution changed his life. Gradually, he became a left liberal who opposed violence and believed in peaceful reforms of the government. Therefore, he was disappointed that the general assemblies failed to revise the French constitution to grant more autonomy to communes and regional districts. Laboulaye believed that the centralization of government would always lead to autocracy, if not tyranny. Indeed, this was what happened in 1852, when Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte brought about a coup d'état and established the autocratic Second Empire, which was to last until 1870.

Laboulaye became one of the foremost critics of the Second Empire, which he more or less regarded as a despotic reign. In *The French Second Empire,* Roger Price notes:

> The 1860s would be characterized by a rising tide of opposition stimulated by criticism of the Emperor's foreign policy and commercial treaties. Irreconcilable liberals led by Thiers, following his election in 1863, were able to appeal to a variety of groups anxious to defend their "vital" interests by imposing parliamentary controls over the errant monarch. The essential liberal position of the liberals was expressed by Edouard de Laboulaye in a pamphlet on *Le Parti libéral, son programme et son avenir* published in 1863. According to Laboulaye, the objective for liberals was "above all to spread liberty throughout our institutions, because it is liberty alone which identifies the problems and which resolves them."[4]

Since Laboulaye believed laws that brought about censorship and oppression endangered the sovereignty of the French people, he sought another constitutional model for democracy. He turned to the United States to explore the possibility of adopting American legal principles and practices in France. As Walter Gray has pointed out in the most thorough monograph of Laboulaye's political works:

> Two themes dominated his writings during the Second Empire: liberty, religious and political, and America, her history and institutions. For Laboulaye, who was disillusioned with the aftermath of 1848 in France, the study of American history and politics furnished a model of liberty and a stable political system that he hoped his fellow Frenchmen would emulate and establish American democracy in France. Furthermore, the course of American history in the 1850s and 1860s, the period of the American Civil War, illustrated for him the heroic efforts necessary to preserve liberty and to maintain a stable government.[5]

Not only did Laboulaye write a three-volume history of the United States, *Histoire des États-Unis d'Amérique* (1855–66), but he also published more than a hundred essays and studies up through the foundation of the Second Republic in 1871. They concerned the revolution in Germany, slavery in America, religious liberty, secularism, the political history of the United States, the works of E. E. Channing, the limits of the state, libraries and literary property, a history of political liberty in France, and many other topics. As a scholar, Laboulaye was remarkably knowledgeable about diverse subjects. As an activist, he played a major role in the foundation of the French antislavery society in the 1860s, influencing the French government's decision to remain neutral during the American Civil War and thereby depriving the South of important materials and financial support.

It was also during the late 1850s and 1860s that Laboulaye turned to fairy tales to critique the abuse of power by the French

hierarchical state and to embed his moral and ethical principles in strikingly political narratives. He hoped to draw attention to well-known European, Asian, and African folk tales by transforming their conservative messages into unusual stories of social justice relevant to the situation in France. This can be seen in his *Contes noirs et blancs* (Black and White Tales, 1858), "Abdallah, ou Le trèfle à quatre feuilles" (Abdallah, or The Four Leaf-Clover, 1859), "Perlino" (1859–60), "La bonne femme" (The Good Woman, 1861), *Contes bohêmes* (Bohemian Tales, 1861–62), and *Pif Paf, ou L'art de gouverner les hommes* (*Smack-Bam, or The Art of Governing Men*, 1862–63). Later, he collected most of these tales and republished them in his books *Contes bleus*, *Nouveaux contes bleus*, and *Derniers contes bleus*. It is important to bear in mind that they were all first published in the *Journal des débats*, indicating that they were primarily written for adults as critiques of the typical fairy tales and the social and cultural conditions of his times. They were certainly not intended for children, although he later dedicated his three volumes of "blue fairy tales" to his children and grandchildren.

While Laboulaye's fairy tales and other fictional works, such as *Paris en Amérique*, in which a Frenchman and his family are transported mysteriously to America to experience "true democracy," were unusual critiques of French social and political conditions, Laboulaye used his fiction to reinforce his political convictions and to avoid censorship. As Napoleon III loosened his authoritarian control in the 1860s, Laboulaye felt freer to publish works such as *L'état et ses limites* (The State and Its Limits) and *Le parti libéral, son programme et son avenir* (The Liberal Party, Its Program, and Its Future), both of which went through more than seven editions after their initial publication in 1863. These works presented key ideas that guided his political activism and the themes in most of his tales. He argued that all citizens, including women and serfs, were to enjoy full individual rights; the separation of state and religion; free education; complete freedom of teaching; freedom of association; freedom of the press, commerce, and industry; and independent municipalities.

By the time the Franco-Prussian War erupted in 1870, Laboulaye hoped France would emerge victorious and transform itself into a modern democracy. Consequently, he mistakenly supported the despotic regime that he had always despised because he thought the Napoleonic government had become more liberal and would bring about reforms. After the Prussian victory, Laboulaye, known and praised for his liberal views, was duped and withdrew to the countryside in shame. When he returned to Paris in 1873, he was elected deputy to the national assembly and helped defeat the monarchists and guarantee the formation of the Third Republic. He was one of the primary writers of the new constitution and was elected a life senator in 1875. The following year, he was appointed administrator of the Collège de France and continued to hold lectures until his death in 1883. Although honored as a great jurist, historian, and political figure in France, he was not celebrated as a writer of ironic, pithy, and philosophical fairy tales published, in part, to provoke and delight readers of the *Journal des débats* and even the conservative thinkers of his times.

In 1869, Laboulaye wrote a preface to an important collection of fairy tales, *Contes allemands du temps passé* (German Fairy Tales of Olden Times), translated and edited by Félix Frank. In this preface, Laboulaye not only demonstrated an extraordinary knowledge of folk and fairy tales but also made an interesting declaration that, I believe, served as the purpose for his own unusual political tales:

> If ever a true scholar appears on earth, that is to say, a man who, instead of collecting old stones or labeling old bones, has the saintly ambition to write the history of the human spirit and ideas which, in turn, have been perpetuated throughout generations, one of the first subjects that will necessarily concern him will be the geography and chronology of fairy tales. The day when an erudite scholar will have done this considerable work,

> people will be astonished to see what role the tales have played in the development of civilization.[6]

Laboulaye was no means this scholar, but he was certainly moved to demonstrate not only how fairy tales were universal and popular but also that they constituted a major role in the civilizing process of every country in the world. This is why he rewrote and adapted folk and fairy tales from Senegal, Iceland, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, Greece, Turkey, and other nations. His aim was to demonstrate their cultural significance. He did *not* translate these tales. Rather, he adapted them freely to draw parallels with conditions in other countries and to develop a particular critique of social and political conditions in France. Laboulaye was an ironic critic who delighted in mocking hierarchies, asserting the rights of women, deploring the exploitation of the poor and needy, revealing the hypocrisy of elites, and explaining how power was often abused by the wealthy. He imbued all his tales with a strong sense of social justice and compassion for the oppressed. Though his stories took place in another time and place, it is clear that he always had French politics and social practices in mind when he adapted his tales. Three of his longer, innovative works—*Abdallah, or The Four-Leaf Clover*, *Paris in America*, and *The Poodle Prince*, which might also be considered political tracts and were very successful during his lifetime—are good examples of how Laboulaye employed metaphorical narratives to convey both his hope for reform and his dismay at the tactics used by elite conservative groups to block the constitutional rights of ordinary people. Interestingly, all three books were written during the Second Empire, when authoritarianism in France caused thousands of people to be arrested and banished from the country. When Laboulaye began exploring how subversive fiction and fairy tales might enable him to vent his displeasure with the ruling classes, he sought to provoke readers to take action against the Caesarism of Louis Napoleon.

In his earliest novel, *Abdallah, or The Four-Leaf Clover*, Laboulaye, a devout but progressive Catholic who was critical of the

church as an institution, sought to shame Christians in France by depicting the great moral humanity of the Muslim faith and its customs and values. He spent well over a year reading and rereading the Koran and doing research on customs in the Middle East. His novel is clearly based on typical folk-tale motifs and plots involving rivalry among friends, competition for a beautiful young woman, and treachery.[7] The narrative concerns two young boys—Omar, which means "ass" in Arabic, and Abdallah, which signifies the "servant of God" in Arabic—and how their destinies are shaped by their upbringing and environment. Omar's father, Mansour, is a wealthy Egyptian merchant, a free thinker, who believes more in the devil than in God. He wants his son raised with Abdallah, the son of a Bedouin woman, Halima, whose husband was killed while protecting one of Mansour's caravans. Despite the fact that Mansour himself does not believe in the ways of Muslims, he wants his son, Omar, to adapt to their customs because he thinks this will make Omar a stronger and smarter merchant when it comes time for his son to take over his business. However, he worries when a dervish reads Omar's horoscope and tells Mansour: "His best friend will be his worst enemy."[8] Still, he is somewhat relieved when the dervish grants him three wishes. He asks that Omar be rich all his life, have good health, love no one and think only of himself. In contrast, Halima wishes for her son Abdallah to be happy and virtuous. The dervish informs her that the only way Abdallah can achieve these goals is to find a four-leaf clover. Then he disappears.

For the next sixteen years, Omar and Abdallah grow up in the desert, learn the sacred Muslim values of the Bedouins, and become best of friends. At sixteen, Mansour takes Omar back to Egypt, where the young man gradually becomes one of the wealthiest and most powerful merchants in the Middle East after his father's death. Indeed, Omar lives according to the creed of avarice and has no feelings for anyone but himself. Meanwhile, Abdallah becomes one of the most venerated Bedouins in the desert, often helping others in need. In his search for the four-leaf clover, he

lives according to the Muslim principles of kindness, hospitality, generosity, and respect of God. When he and Omar meet as young men, they still feel a deep friendship for one another, but their moral principles clash. Moreover, Omar becomes incensed when a young woman named Leila, whom he wants for his wife, decides to wed Abdallah. Consequently, Omar brings about the death of Halima, Hafiz, and Leila. Although Abdallah has an opportunity to kill Omar, he cannot bring about the death of the man he loved as a brother and Abdallah is left to die alone in the desert. Later, a slave loyal to Abdallah kills Omar and then goes into the desert to die next to Abdallah.

In many respects Laboulaye's "religious" novel is more a Bildungsroman than a folk narrative. In fact, one could say that *Abdallah, or The Four-Leaf Clover* is a "twin" novel of education that traces two young men whose moral development depends on their education and advisers. Tragically, there is no happy resolution to their differences, but Laboulaye clearly sets the ethical principles followed by Abdallah as the preferred values he wished people—in particular, the French—would cultivate in a liberal and just society. That this would prove to be impossible is the message he delivered in his next intriguing novel of magic realism.

Paris in America was written in the ironic style that became characteristic of most of his fairy tales. The novel is composed for the most part in the first person by Dr. René Lefebvre, Laboulaye's alter ego, who doubts the powers of an American mesmerist, Jonathan Dream, who delivers a speech on magnetism in Paris. In a heated exchange with Dr. Lefebvre, Dream declares that he will transport not only the doctor but his family and the entire city of Paris to America. Indeed, the next morning Lefebvre wakes up in Massachusetts along with his entire family. At first, the doctor thinks that he is dreaming, but then he must admit that he, his family, and Paris have somehow been transported to America. What is most strange is that his family and the Parisians act as though they have always lived in America and are Americans. Since the doctor has always held negative opinions about America

and considered the people and the country somewhat anarchical and crude, he is surprised to find that the Americans have strong family and social values, believe in religious pluralism, support freedom of the press, and seek to promote education for all people. As he gradually sheds his anti-American prejudices, he is elected first as inspector general of transportation and then as attorney general. He visits churches, newspaper offices, schools, and hospitals and realizes that Americans embrace different creeds and respect different ways of life more than the French. Finally, he becomes a dedicated democrat and, like most of the people in Paris, Massachusetts, he supports the North as the Civil War erupts. It is at this point that Lefebvre, his family, and the residents of Paris are whisked back to France, where he begins to espouse the democratic way of life.

When Dr. Lefebvre talks about his experiences in America, however, and strives to bring about change in France, his family and a medical doctor named Olybrius believe that he is suffering from a sickness and the effects of opium allegedly used to cure him. In discussing America, Olybrius tells him:

> Your brain is not in a normal state. A society without administration, without army, without gendarmes, with the savage liberty of praying, thinking, speaking, and acting, each in his own way, is, you must grant, one of those abominable nightmares, which opium alone can bring forth. Your system would not last a quarter of an hour; it is the negation of all the principles and conditions of that civilization which makes the unity of our grand nation. By constituting a hierarchical and centralized administration, the wisdom of our fathers long since raised France to the first rank and taught Frenchmen that liberty is obedience. In this is our glory and strength; do not forget it, my dear brother, and return to yourself. These anarchical ideas which trouble your brain, and which never before entered the head of a Frenchman, tell you plainly that you are ill—and so more ill that you don't feel it.[9]

Dr. Lefebvre protests, and the more he protests, the more he is considered dangerously insane and consequently is incarcerated in an insane asylum. The novel ends ironically with Lefebvre writing from the madhouse: "My fate is fixed; I have played a dangerous game, and lost. A fool, who entitles himself a physician, has declared me mad; my good friends joyfully confirm the decree of ignorance. Here I am shut up, and forever. Can I extinguish the flame which illuminates my brain? Can I deny the truth? No; I have known liberty; I have tasted on my lips this intoxicating honey, I have caught a glimpse of the eternal ideal, I am mad! I will not be cured!"[10]

The ending of *Paris in America* recalls a phrase uttered in Hermann Broch's post–World War II trilogy *The Sleepwalkers*, in which one of the characters asks: Are we insane because we have not gone insane? Laboulaye anticipates this critique by one hundred years and is more specific in his comments: "Frenchmen have even more wit than they attribute to themselves. To imprison those who think, speak, and reason is a masterstroke, the success of which is infallible. Where force is, there is public opinion. Go, happy sheep, browse in silence; bleat to yourselves that you are the kings of the world, your shepherds will not be the ones to refuse you this innocent pleasure. Amuse yourselves, enjoy life, you have nothing to fear; the mad men are under bolts, they would disturb your quietness; the wiser one is, the more he laughs."[11]

Though a professor at an esteemed institution, Collège de France, and a respected member of the establishment, Laboulaye wrote from the margins. That is, his fiction granted him "fool's freedom" and enabled him to write freely about the hypocritical and savage ways of the civilizing process in France. His third novel, *The Poodle Prince*, also translated as *The Spaniel Prince*, is another vigorous and comic commentary about the absurd customs of the French ruling class and government. In this case, it takes the form of a long, delightful fairy tale based on the deep tradition of tales regarding the magical transformation of humans into animals. Laboulaye was undoubtedly familiar with Apuleius's first-century

Latin novel *The Golden Ass*, in which a young man is turned into a donkey for having insulted the goddess Isis and must undergo various tests before he is transformed back into a human.

Laboulaye sets his fairy-tale novel in the once-upon-a-time kingdom of the flycatchers or ninnies. He uses the French term *Gobe-mouches*, which connotes simpletons who will believe almost anything they hear. These people are ruled by the royal family Tulips (read Bonaparte). At the beginning of the story, the queen has not been able to have a child until heaven grants her a son named Jacinth. She and her husband invite the Fairy of the Day to become godmother. After this fairy's malicious sister, the Fairy of the Night, suspiciously bestows the baby with strength, beauty, and intelligence, the so-called good Fairy of the Day surprisingly tells the king and queen that she will turn Jacinth into a poodle when he turns sixteen. Thereafter, she will do this whenever she wishes, until he learns more about democratic governing and the treachery of his advisers and courtiers, who cannot be trusted.

Indeed, after his father, the king of the ninnies, dies, and Jacinth, the new king, turns sixteen, the young boy is advised by three ministers—that is, by three conniving nincompoops, who swindle Jacinth. As a dog, however, he is often present at secret, treacherous discussions of his ministers, including one about the beautiful daughter of one of the ministers, who pretends to love him but actually disdains him. After overhearing their conversations in his canine form, Jacinth in his human form exposes them and takes control of the government as the boy king who wants to abolish the monarchy. He calls upon the Fairy of the Day to help him invent a constitution that will promote the happiness of his people. The fairy begins by advising him to grant them freedom, work, and autonomy, but Jacinth wants to put more into the constitution and wants more consultation and views on democracy. So, the fairy takes him to visit Aristotle and Ahasuerus and young democracies such as Liberia and the United States. In the end, "he drew up a constitution in twelve articles, which . . . was exactly the same

as the charter of Liberia. In reality, it was the fortieth edition of the constitution of the United States, which is going through all the countries of the new world, and which will some day arrive in Europe, after having regenerated the Chinese."[12] There is no "typical" happy ending to this strange fairy-tale novel, but it is clearly an optimistic work that resonates with a utopian spirit characteristic of most of Laboulaye's fairy tales.

Laboulaye's hopeful or utopian spirit distinguishes his work from others in the history of the literary fairy tale in France, if not in Europe. In the context of his times, he was unique. First, he was one of the few writers during the period 1855–1880 who experimented with fairy tales of diverse types to mock the emperor and the government. Second, none of the fairy-tale writers were as seriously engaged as he was in the politics of France, and none sought to confront the drastic measures taken by Louis Napoleon in the 1850s and 1860s by writing fairy tales in a popular weekly newspaper and then publishing them in books. Finally, no other French writers displayed Laboulaye's critical utopian ideology in fairy-tale works that sustained central tenets of the liberal party. As Sudhir Hazareesingh points out in *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy*,

> there were two distinct clusters of liberals during the Second Empire, and on one side were the optimistic liberals, who saw themselves as the inheritors of the Enlightenment values of reason and progress. Liberalism has a faith, in the belief of progress, as well as the conviction that freedom is valuable and beneficial, that truth can emerge from discussion, and that infinite perfectibility is the natural trend of humanity. This progressive liberalism was open, tolerant, trusting, and humane; it was a liberalism of hope. Its practitioners were men such as Prévost-Paradol, Laboulaye, and Ollivier, who were often not

> far removed from the values espoused by moderate republicans; like them, in particular, they rejected conservatism and believed in the possibility of incremental change and political accommodation.[13]

This liberalism of hope is key to understanding the viewpoints that Laboulaye took in his fairy tales, even when he was reluctant to write happy endings.

Interestingly, the fairy tales created and published later in France, during the rise of the Third Republic in the 1870s and turn of the century, were totally different from Laboulaye's radical tales. In *Fairy Tales for the Disillusioned: Enchanted Stories from the French Decadent Tradition*, Gretchen Schultz and Lewis Seifert write:

> Trends in literature during the second half of the century would also seem to have been inhospitable to the genre of the fairy tale. . . . The fairy tale nonetheless thrived at the end of the century: one critic writes of an "invasion of fairies" around 1880. This burst in production of fairy tales coincided with the decadent movement, the cynicism of which countered positivism in general and naturalism in particular. Beyond its literary and artistic manifestations, decadence could be called a philosophical position that took issue with the celebration of progress. . . . Although it was much more innovative and experimental than was the stylistic conservatism of naturalist fiction, decadent literature followed a logic that was *politically* conservative.[14]

Laboulaye was anything but conservative in his fairy tales, which predated the works of the "decadents." In *Smack-Bam, or The Art of Governing Men* (2018), I selected sixteen tales, taken from those originally published in the *Journal des débats* and in his three books of blue fairy tales. They reveal the conflicts over liberty and justice in the period that he wrote them. In addition, they are representative of his style, ideology, and mission to change the world through fairy tales, or at the very least, to mock and critique the ruling elites of his times. Change for the better, he thought,

was inevitable. Though he often noted that he was adapting a folk tale from some other country, he very rarely gave the exact source, and when he did, it is clear that his method of translation and adaptation was geared to heighten the political aspects of the tale.

"Briam the Fool," for example, was taken from Jon Arnason's "The Story of Brjám" in *Icelandic Legends*.[15] Arnason (1819–1888) was one of the foremost Icelandic folklorists of the nineteenth century, and his version of "Briam the Fool"—he also published a variant of "The Little Gray Man"—was much more simplistic, terse, and conciliatory than Laboulaye's adaptation. It was much closer to the oral tradition, and his tale includes a princess, whom Brjám weds after he has taken revenge by causing the king to be killed. Then he becomes king. Laboulaye's protagonist Briam has much more agency than Brjám, and the narrator of the tale is deft and ironic. Most important, after the king, who has stolen Brjám's cow, and the captain of the guards are killed, the narrator explains that Briam refuses the good queen's offer to live in the castle. Instead, he returns to his mother with the family cow and then disappears. His rejection of the aristocracy is the "happy end" of the tale. Indeed, in the 1860s, Laboulaye himself wanted very little to do with the French monarchy, and his tales strike a note for liberty, especially for the common people.

In "Zerbino the Bumpkin," adapted from a Neapolitan collection, which Laboulaye does not name, he depicts the king and his prime minster as arrogant fools, more stupid than the simple woodcutter, who is unknowingly granted the power to have all his wishes fulfilled after he acts kindly to a fairy. Without realizing it, he causes the king's daughter Aleli to fall totally in love with him, which the king considers a disgrace. He banishes Zerbino and his daughter from his kingdom with an irritating prime minister as company. Eventually, Zerbino and Aleli get rid of the prime minister and choose to abandon the pretentious court society for life on an enchanted island. It is quite possible that Laboulaye based his version of this tale type on either Giovan Francesco Straparola's "Pietro the Fool" in *Le piacevoli notti* (1550–53) or Giambattista

Basile's "Peruonto" in *Lo cunto de le cunti* (1634).[16] In these variants, the woodcutter gets angry at the princess and wishes her to become pregnant. It is, therefore, for this reason that the king sends the two of them with their child off to sea in a barrel. Thanks to the woodcutter's magic powers, however, they make their home on an island and eventually reconcile with the king. Laboulaye dismissed such reconciliation because of his more defiant political perspective. Instead of a comic tale about a miraculous pregnancy that baffles a princess and her father and causes their "King Lear" separation, Laboulaye's version focuses on the unjust absolutist king and his opportunistic prime minister, and their conflict with a woodcutter, whose integrity makes the king and minister look like fools.

Laboulaye firmly believed that it was only through moral education and human compassion that politicians could bring about good government. This is the major theme in one of his longer fairy tales, "Smack-Bam, or The Art of Governing Men," which more than likely was based on amusing Italian stories such as Laura Gonzenbach's "Sorfarina" in *Sicilianische Märchen* (Sicilian Tales, 1870) and Giuseppe Pitrè's "Catarina la Sapienti" (Catarina the Wise) in *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliani* (Fairy Tales, Novellas, and Popular Sicilian Stories, 1875). In the Sicilian versions, which were told and disseminated in the first half of the nineteenth century, a prince is sent to a school and taught by a bright, attractive young woman named Pazza from the middle classes, who smacks him when he does not pay attention to her lessons. He vows revenge, weds her, and imprisons her when she refuses to apologize for the smack. He keeps threatening her and then decides to leave and spend time in Rome, Naples, and Genoa. Thanks to the help of a fairy or her father, the young woman sails to these cities and seduces him. She gives birth to three children, and when he wants to marry a princess, she still does not want to apologize and confronts him with his three offspring. The prince then realizes how much he really loves his wife. Although Laboulaye keeps many of the comic aspects of this tale type, he

makes incisive political changes that expose the shallowness of the prince, who must be groomed by the beautiful Pazza to learn how to govern more seriously and oppose the corruption of the court and government that are almost overthrown by a coup d'état. Laboulaye weaves familiar themes throughout this tale: the aristocracy is shallow and basically seeks to gain wealth and power; the aristocracy needs to learn how to govern these tendencies to enhance the independence and liberty of the people; women are just as intelligent, if not more intelligent, than men and can govern wisely; there are no conclusive happy ends in life, only struggles that reveal the moral integrity of the people engaged in conflicts.

Laboulaye weaves philosophical and political proverbs and comments in his tales to critique the decadence of the French civilizing process while also suggesting that there is room for optimism. Some of his proverbs in "Zerbino the Bumpkin" include

> There is nothing finer than glory, but it has its disadvantages.
> As the song says, after three refusals, good luck.
> One tires of everything, even of happiness.

In "The Eve of St. Mark" there are

> A woman does not like to have her heart and mind read.
> Do not scratch others, if you don't want to be flayed alive.
> To be loved is the privilege of youth.
> Life is the dream of a shadow.
> Sickness is the monopoly of humans.
> Life is a dream that begins and ends in nothingness. Such is the destiny of humans.

There are strong hints that the world would be a better place if women asserted themselves to determine their rights or reigned instead of men. This can be seen in such "feminist tales" as "The Young Woman Who Was Wiser Than the Emperor," "The Lazy Spinner," and "The Story about the Tailor and His Daughter."

In his early introduction to *Contes bleus*, Laboulaye explained that fairy tales were just as valuable as political and philosophical

tracts because they posited a more just world in fantasy than in reality:

> Where does this particular taste that people have for the marvelous come from? Is it that a lie is sweeter than truth? No, a fairy tale is not a lie. And the child who is amused by fairy tales or frightened by them is not deceived by them for an instant. The tales are the ideal, something truer than the truth of the world, the triumph of goodness, beauty, and justice. Innocence always wins. Often, it is true that the victim spends thirty years in a dungeon with serpents. Sometimes the victim is even cut into pieces, but in the end things work out. The villain is always punished. It's not necessary to wait for a better world to punish crime and to crown virtue.
>
> The secret of these marvelous tales can be found there! It is what constitutes the charm of the fairies. It is not gold or silver that spreads the tales everywhere but the magic wand which restores order on earth and at the same time annihilates those two enemies of human life, space and time. What does it matter that Griseldis suffers fifteen years of exile and desertion! In the final test, she will be young and kind as she was on the first day.[17]

It is though suffering and struggle against injustice that many of the protagonists in Laboulaye's tales develop self-awareness and awareness of the evil in the world. In "Fragolette," the young maiden must suffer abuse from a nasty witch until she realizes how love can save her. In "The Little Gray Man," a small prince must endure various trials until he wins a princess. But it is not always suffering and human compassion that bring about happiness. Laboulaye was particularly critical of greedy people. Consequently, in "The Fairy Crawfish," a comic tale that resembles the Grimms' "The Fisherman's Wife," he mocks a peasant's wife who wants to become God. In "The Prudent Farmer," he portrays a man who resists greed and chooses wisdom, which enables him to avoid murder and achieve happiness. It is knowing the world

through magic, as in "The Language of Animals," that enables "good" people to succeed in their endeavors to live just lives.

Despite this "utopian" perspective, Laboulaye was disenchanted by the sociopolitical changes in France and was often skeptical about whether human change was possible. In fact, his tales also show his great disappointment in human beings' failure to establish societies in which everyone receives just treatment. In stories like "Falsehood and Truth," for instance, truth is mocked and buried, and in "The Eve of St. Mark," a young boy dies after realizing how cruel humans are to one another. Only through tender love and kindness can people who embody Kant's moral imperative—do unto others as you would have done unto you—survive and find happiness.

Ironically, or perhaps, unfortunately, everything negative that Laboulaye depicted in his fairy tales—corrupt governments, war, exploitation of the poor, greed, murder—remains problematic in the real world of the twenty-first century. Laboulaye was not only a sensitive and perceptive critic of his times but also an ethical philosopher who foresaw the deeply rooted social and political problems that continue to haunt us. Strikingly, his ideas and tales still have relevance for our present conflicted times.

3

The Many Voices and Lives of Charles Godfrey Leland

The stately Charles Godfrey Leland. (Illustration by Jack Zipes.)

IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE to assess Charles Godfrey Leland and his significance for American and European culture because he had so many diverse identities in different contexts and often all at one time—disgruntled Princeton student; awestruck scholar

in Germany; combatant in the 1848 French Revolution; journalist; humorist; translator; soldier in the Northern Army during the Civil War; dilettante; folklorist; researcher of customs and lore of Native Americans, British Romani, and African Americans; protofeminist; founder of industrial art schools in Philadelphia; and pioneer in the studies of magic, which he took most seriously. He was also charismatic, hyperbolic, opportunistic, and a "devout" believer in the power of nature and magic. For Leland, all truths can be discovered in nature by learning the secrets of magic and shamanism. This is why he himself constantly shape-shifted and drew close to marginalized people.

How could one person have assumed so many different roles and identities in his lifetime, as well as in the societies in which he worked and thrived? Clearly, Leland had a monstrous curiosity and appetite to explore everything with which he came into contact. Naive and worldly, he really knew nothing thoroughly as a specialist. Yet he always wanted to know more than other specialist researchers did.

Toward the end of his career, the *New York Tribune* published the following tribute to Leland:

> The recent publication by Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland of a volume of Florentine legends provokes a comment not strictly related to the book in question. It is intrinsically valuable, but it sets one thinking also of what notable services Mr. Leland has rendered to literature, to the study of folklore, to industrial art, to more interests than can be touched upon here. It inspires some wonder as to why we hear so little of him, as to why nothing seems to be getting itself done in the preparation of a complete and uniform edition of his works, beginning with Hans Breitmann and embracing all his multifarious essays in fascinating fields. The list is divided among several publishers, and while specialists laud this book and that, there is no concentrated recognition of Mr. Leland's significance as a man of letters.[1]

Unfortunately, we do not have a "complete and uniform edition of his works." Given their quantity and diversity, assembling such an edition would be, in my opinion, impossible. Instead, to give readers an idea of his research contribution to folklore, I here discuss representative folk and fairy tales, legends, and stories from five books that he published in the period 1882 to 1901: *The Gypsies* (1882), *The Algonquin Legends of New England* (1884), *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-Telling* (1891), *Legends of Florence*, two volumes (1895–96), and *The Unpublished Legends of Virgil* (1899). Though these tales cannot be considered "authentic" folk tales—that is, stories taken down word by word from the lips of Romani, native Americans, real witches, peasants, and folklorists—they are highly significant because of their historical and cultural value.

In most instances, Leland recorded these tales by hand in personal encounters with his informants, or he collected them from friends and acquaintances. He then honed the tales for publication so that they became translations of the narratives, not exactly the same as those he heard or received. This is not to say that he made major changes. But the fact of the matter is that he was like most of the aspiring American folklorists of his time, 1850 to 1900, who were mainly white and from the middle classes. The foremost collectors such as Franz Boas, George Lyman Kittredge, Thomas Crane, Francis James Child, and many others were dedicated to a project of preserving the culture of minority groups and societies in America and foreign countries. In America and Europe, highly educated, independent, and literate scholars took a great interest in various groups of people who allegedly could not speak or write for themselves and yet were historically vital for understanding the civilizing process of the dominant and elite groups. What distinguishes Leland from the major folklorists of the nineteenth century is his *literary* bent. All the tales, no matter whether from Romani, Native Americans, witches, or colleagues, were transformed and often embellished by Leland to represent his particular regard for their poetry, purity, and history. Secret truths were embedded, and in this regard, Leland was a seeker of truth.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, most American folklorists were originally not associated with a university, and the field of folklore had not yet been established as a "legitimate" discipline in the academy. The American Folklore Society was first founded in 1888; and its members endeavored to set standards for collecting and publishing tales that evolved out of a productive schism. In Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt's superb book *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent* (1995), she examines how the literary folklorists tended to be more concerned with texts, whereas the anthropologists focused on the context and the life of the people. Both groups had the same goal: to establish folklore as a legitimate science or field of study in the American academy.

Leland was untrained as a folklorist and always a marginal figure in the American Folklore Society, and in England as well. Aware of the schism, he nevertheless did not take sides, for he was an adherent of both. In fact, he always wrote from the margins and never conformed to the rules and regulations of either group. Leland wanted to be something other than he was, and by studying the lore and customs of dominated peoples, he sought to become part of these groups and "cleanse" himself of civilizing forces. Angela-Marie Varesano summarizes his position best:

> Folklore was for him, during the 1880's, an activity that enabled him to become close to Nature and to apprehend the sublime poetry within it. It brought him into the woods, and semi-wilds, where he came into contact with people who lived close to Nature, with Nature's children and mediators. Folklore included those strange narratives of legends and beliefs that were in themselves a kind of poetry. Indeed, Leland asserts that most of these Indian traditions were originally poems, and that it is probably that all were sung, while they still retained the character of serious mythical or sacred narrative, although when he found them they were in a transition state of heroic tales. He conceived of his job as a collector to be that of an interpreter as well; thus, he felt it was necessary to compile the fragments,

> versions, and episodes of adventures available to him into a whole that had dramatic impact on the reader. He was concerned that the material presented in his books spoke not to the admirer of precisely-recorded words, but to those who could appreciate the poetry within them.[2]

Born on August 15, 1824, in Philadelphia to a prosperous merchant's family, Charles Godfrey Leland was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and become a lawyer or businessman. However, as a young boy, who was often sick, he attended several different schools and showed more interest in the occult, philosophy, and literature. Consequently, it was clear that his "destiny" would have little to do with commerce or law. Soon after he passed his Latin examinations in high school, he was admitted to Princeton University, where he continued his exploration of Gnosticism and metaphysics and wrote stories and poems until his graduation in 1845. Since he did not show an affinity for any particular profession, his father suggested that he join one of his cousins and study for a year or two in Europe. This was a turning point in his life.

Leland had never shown any interest in politics, and at this time in Europe, in almost every country he visited before the 1848 revolutions, the political tensions were strong. He was often drawn into conversations about slavery in America, civil rights, and government. In his *Memoirs*, he wrote, "I had never thought much of this subject before I left home. I did not *like* slavery, nor to think about it. But in Europe I did like such thought, and I returned fully impressed with the belief that slavery was, as Charles Sumner said, 'the sum of all crimes.'"[3] In short, his studies in Germany and France and his trips to other countries such as Austria and Italy contributed to an awakening of social inequities and injustice. It is important to remember that he was only twenty-one and a gangly six-foot-two naive American when he left for Europe and that he had never really lived on his own. Aside from learning about different cultural differences on the Continent, he began enjoying drinking at taverns and debating, and for a young man raised in a

Quaker city by Unitarian/Episcopalian parents, this was a major step toward independent thinking and acting. Eventually, it led to his fighting on the barricades in Paris against the royalists.

It would be misleading, however, to think that Leland became a left-wing rebel or broke with the legacy of his family. As his letters to his parents and younger brother Henry show, Leland was very devoted to his mother and father and grateful for their giving him the opportunity to spend three years in Europe.[4] When he returned home, he showed his appreciation by studying law to assist his father. However, this gesture was short-lived, and Leland spent the next ten years working as an editor and journalist for various magazines and newspapers in Philadelphia and New York City.

In 1849, he met his future wife, Isabelle Fisher, from a notable Philadelphian family, and married her in 1855. She was to remain his loyal wife for the rest of his peripatetic life, and it is unfortunate that we do not have records of her life because she must have been remarkably strong and brave to have put up with the ever-wandering Leland. During the period from 1855 to 1860, he was somewhat stable and moved to New York, where he began a real apprenticeship as editor for various publications. He wrote hundreds of articles on opera, the theater, literature, politics, and philosophy; began publishing popular books such as *Poetry and Mystery of Dreams* (1854) and *Meister Karl's Sketch-Book* (1855); and translated Heinrich Heine's *Pictures of Travel and Book Songs* (1855), which received excellent reviews.

When he could not find a permanent job in New York, he returned to Philadelphia and continued writing and editing magazines and newspapers. However, his literary activities came to a full stop in 1862 when the Civil War erupted; he and his younger brother Henry joined the army of the North in 1864 as privates and fought for the abolition of slavery until the end of 1865. Unfortunately, Henry, with whom Leland was very close, was wounded at one point and eventually died from his injuries in 1869.

After the Civil War ended, Leland was unemployed and spent a year in his father's house, again writing for various newspapers and journals and pondering his next step, for he still did not feel "grounded" in any particular job. All he wanted to do was to write, while his father proclaimed him a failure and ne'er do well.[5] Unfortunately, his father did not live long enough to see his son become famous, after the publication of his popular book *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (1868). His father died that very same year.

For over ten years, Leland had been publishing amusing ditties in his own invented German-American dialect about a fictitious immigrant named Hans Breitmann, who comes to America after the 1848 revolution failed and tries to find a new home and role in life. Leland's famous first ballad begins this way:

Hans Breitmann's Party

Hans Breitmann gife a barty,
Dey had biano-blayin;
I felled in lofe mit a Merican frau,
Her name vas Madilda Yane.
She hat haar as prown ash a pretzel,
Her eyes vas himmel-plue,
Und ven dey looket indo mine,
Dey shplit mine heart in two.

Hans Breitmann gife a barty,
I vent dere you'll pe pound.
I valtzet mit Madilda Yane
Und vent shpinnen round und round.
De pootiest Fraeulein in de House,
She vayed 'pout dwo hoondred pound,
Und efery dime she gife a shoomp
She made de vindows sound.[6]

The good-hearted, beer-drinking, courageous Breitmann was never a figure of satire. Rather, Leland, who admired Germans and

German culture, wanted to depict how difficult it was for Germans (and perhaps other immigrants) to adapt to American culture during a period of civil unrest. The humor of the ballads, often sent in letters to friends, was intended to provide relief in hard times. And it was relief that Leland and his wife were seeking when they decided to use his father's inheritance and earnings from his writings to live abroad for a few years. In the meantime, *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* was a huge success in America, as well as in England. As Elizabeth Robins Pennnell, Leland's niece and biographer, wrote: "Breitmann's success was scarcely less in England, where he came and conquered almost as soon as at home, though it is hard to say just why the *Ballads* with their curious medley of what their author describes as 'Teutonic philosophy and sentiment, beer, music and romance,' should have appealed to the British public. . . . Everybody wanted to read Breitmann and, when the author of Breitmann arrived in England, everybody wanted to see Breitmann. He was the lion of London drawing-rooms as long as he could endure the discomfort of it."[7]

Indeed, England was so receptive and intriguing for the Lelands that they remained there a good eleven years, and it was during this time that Leland turned away from drawing rooms to embrace the English Romani. Leland did not have any set plans when he and his wife arrived in England, and they spent 1870 touring the country. After settling down in London, he and his wife took a trip to Brighton with friends to visit the ruins of an ancient Roman fort. While there, they had an encounter that was to influence all his future work and enabled him to change his identity as the author of the Breitmann ballads to that of a dedicated folklorist. As he wrote about his visit to Brighton in his *Memoirs*:

> The living curiosity of the place was a famous old gypsy woman named Gentilla Cooper, a pure blood or real *Kalorat* Romany. I had already in America studied Pott's "Thesaurus of Gypsy Dialects," and picked up many phrases of the tongue from the works of Borrow, Simson and others. The old dame tackled us

> at once. As soon as I could, I whispered in her ear an improvised rhyme: "The basho and kani, / The rye and the rani, Hav'd akai 'pre' o boro lon pani." Which means that the cock and the hen, the gentleman and the lady, came hither across the great salt water. The effect on the gypsy was startling; she fairly turned pale. Hustling the ladies away to one side to see a beautiful view, she got me alone and hurriedly exclaimed, "Rya—master! *be* you one of our people?" with much more. We became very good friends, and this little incident had in time for me great results, and many strange experiences of gypsy life.[8]

Angela-Marie Varesano points out in "Charles Godfrey Leland: The Eccentric Folklorist" that Leland's future method of collecting tales from Indigenous people, whether in America or in Europe, depended on the serendipitous meeting of unusual people who would help him discover legends, wonder tales, animal tales, and secrets about magic that he would then record and shape for publication. Moreover, Leland would always try to impress his informants by speaking in their language or demonstrating knowledge of their culture.

In the case of the English Romani, he became so enraptured by their customs, songs, and stories that he learned their language as best he could and transformed himself into the Rey, which meant "respected gentleman," a title and identity that he loved to assume until his death in 1903. In 1873, Leland published *The English Gypsies and Their Language*, which included folk stories, customs, sayings, and songs collected directly from the mouths of the gypsies. However, Leland typically embellished and reworked all his narratives while remaining true to his intention to portray humble people. There is some hubris to his method, and consequently, while his tales are lively renditions of Romani anecdotes and customs, they are his interpretations and reflect his particular approach to all the materials he gathered from "natural" people whom he admired. Varesano perceptively comments: "The study of the Gypsy, for Leland, was in a very real way the study of Nature

itself. These strange people were for him a contact with that well-spring of all art and truth which he praised. The Gypsies were fascinating and important because they were a people still in contact with nature, and in learning their ways, in studying them, in becoming one of them, he was participating in the truest kind of art. This idea will be found in all his subsequent studies of folklore; it underlies his fieldwork with the American Indians, and the investigation of the sorceresses of Italy."[9]

From 1871 until 1879, Leland took many different trips in North Africa and Europe, and wherever he went, he continued to study and learn gypsy dialects and customs to preserve vanishing relics of ancient times. Two important results of his research and travels were *English Gypsy Songs* (1875) and *The Gypsies* (1882). However, it was not just the gypsies who enabled him to develop and cultivate his folkloristic philosophy but also his later studies of the American Indians, the Etruscans, and the magic of Italian witches. For Leland, it was impossible to understand present living conditions without fully understanding the past. As he stated later in *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-Telling*, "There is nothing whatever in the past relating to the influences which have swayed man, however strange, eccentric, superstitious, or even repulsive they may seem, which is not of great and constantly increasing value. And if we of the present time begin already to see this, how much more important will these facts be to the men of the future, who, by virtue of more widely extended knowledge and comparison, will be better able than we are to draw wise conclusions undreamed of now. But the chief conclusion for us is to *collect* as much as we can, while it is yet extant, of all the strange lore of the olden time, instead of wasting time in forming idle theories about it."[10]

Although Leland and his wife had established themselves in London, and Leland himself had become a recognized authority of gypsy life in England, they suddenly decided to return to Philadelphia in 1879. Always curious and active, Leland, who had been a very good artist and designer, began to take a strong interest in the teaching of industrial arts and spent the next four years

teaching at the Industrial Art School in Philadelphia, which he helped to establish. Obviously influenced by the arts and crafts movement in England, Leland believed that public schools should cater to the interests of young people from the lower classes who needed technical and art training so that they might learn a trade. Up to that point, there were no schools in Philadelphia that provided the children of disadvantaged families with such an education. While he was teaching, he went on to publish several books, such as *The Minor Arts* (1879), *Practical Education* (1888), and *Drawing and Designing* (1889), to disseminate his ideas. In 1892, he designed one of his own books, *The Book of One Hundred Riddles of the Fairy Bellaria* (1892), which demonstrates his unusual talent as an artist.[11]

Aside from his major work in public schools, Leland began focusing on American folklore. In the summer of 1882, he was visiting relatives and friends in New England when he met several acculturated Algonquin Indians. While there, he interviewed them and continued to correspond with them for two years. The result from his collaboration with these informants led to the publication of *The Algonquin Legends of New England* (1884), a pamphlet with the title *The Mythology, Legends and Folk-Lore of the Algonkins* (1887), and *Kuloskap the Master and Other Algonkin Poems* (1902). As he had done with the English gypsies, Leland sought to celebrate the American Indians as "noble savages," and to a certain extent, this resulted in stereotyping and transforming the Algonquin tales to reflect his own political concerns about America.

In his excellent study *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions*, Thomas Parkhill carefully demonstrates that Leland had racist notions about Native Americans as a young man, but through greater contact with them over the years, his attitudes changed to the point that he admired and celebrated their customs and stories.[12] Moreover, Parkhill maintains that Leland had once again conceived himself as someone else, as part Indian through his contact with the Algonquins, and consequently felt that he could alter

and edit the tales he collected to enable white Americans to understand the profound significance of the tales. Leland believed that the Algonquin tales could reveal that humankind's first religion was shamanism, embedded in the magic of the stories. They contained truths that had to be mined.

Unlike his writing on the Romani, Leland's collecting of Algonquin legends and stories assumed a "religious" mission. Leland hoped his readers would understand the secrets of the Algonquin narratives and grasp the poetry of nature that made life worth living.[13] Therefore, he focused on the magic of shamanism in the tales and endeavored to give Americans a sense of their place in world history. As Parkhill remarks:

> The wild and strong are connected with the "Indian" and the "Indian" with the heart and soul of the United States. Leland, taking that characteristic of the stereotype that vouchsafed the "Indian" was close to nature, employed it in an approving manner in order to meld the tenets of German Romanticism into the unsettled milieu of the Gilded Age of the United States. His aim: to protect the country's heart and soul, to see it "reopened with the fairies of yore," to call Place into being. His efforts to shape, edit, and finally improvise Abenaki and Micmac stories are about making meaning; and not Abenaki or Micmac meaning. They shore up the last part of his story. Leland's anticipation that the nation would come to forge a connection to the natural landscape it had come to inhabit through the vehicle of "Indian" stories is essentially a concern of Place.[14]

Leland's approach to folklore and especially Indigenous lore was highly unusual at that time. We must remember that the British Folklore Society had just been established in 1878, and the American Folklore Society officially in 1888. Whatever standards were being set for collecting and translating tales were flexible, and even when some were firmly set, they did not apply to Leland. In many ways, he was unique and remained unique as a folklorist until his death. Indeed, he was well aware of his role and made this

clear in a letter to his niece in 1895: "There is a great difference between collecting folk-lore as a curiosity and *living* it in truth. I do not believe that in all the Folk-Lore Societies there is one person who lives it in reality as I do. I cannot describe it—what it *once* was is lost to the world. You cannot understand it at second hand."[15]

By June of 1884, Leland and his wife decided to return to London, where he hoped to continue his work in the minor arts that had been successful in Philadelphia. For the next four years, Leland traveled a great deal on the Continent, where he was either writing about the gypsies or helping educators in different countries to establish schools based on his books *Practical Education* and *Drawing and Designing*. In the winter of 1889, the Lelands stopped in Florence, which was to become their home for the rest of their lives. In fact, it seemed that Leland was destined to live out his life in Florence, where he produced what are, in my opinion, his most intriguing books: *Etruscan Roman Remains* (1892), *The Book of One Hundred Riddles of the Fairy Bellaria* (1892), *Legends of Florence* (1895–96), *Aradia, or The Gospel of Witches* (1899), and *The Unpublished Legends of Virgil* (1899).

It was while wandering the streets of Florence that Leland accidentally encountered a young woman by the name of Maddalena, who not only enchanted him but also provided him with the information and tales that he published from 1892 until 1902. In his manuscript notes, he describes her as "a young woman who would have been taken for a Gypsy in England, but in whose face in Italy, I soon learned to know the antique Etruscan, with its strange mysteries, to which was added the indefinable glance of the Witch. She was from the Romagna Toscana, born in the heart of its unsurpassingly wild and romantic scenery, amid cliffs, headlong torrents, forests and old legendary castles. I did not gather all the facts for a long time, but gradually found that she was of a witch family, or one whose members had, from time immemorial, told fortunes, repeated ancient legends, gathered incantations and learned how to intone them, prepared enchanted medicines, philtres, or spells."[16]

Not only did Maddalena provide him with an abundance of tales, legends, incantations, songs, and spells; she also introduced Leland to other Italian witches or knowledgeable people who gave him tales and information. Leland saw her constantly while he was living in Florence, and she certainly was the inspiration behind the two volumes of Florentine tales he published in 1895–96. He also credited Marietta Pery, Roma Lister, and Teresa Wyndam for helping him and stated: "My tales are, with a few exceptions, derived directly or indirectly from the people themselves—having been recorded in the local dialect—the exceptions being a few racy anecdotes of the soil taken from antique jest-books and such bygone halfpenny literature as belonged to the multitude, and had its origin among them. These I could not, indeed, well omit, as they refer to some peculiar place in Florence."[17] Leland stresses that all the tales are more or less witch stories because the witches in Italy are the repositories of all the Italian folklore.

Leland's high regard for witches and sorcerers culminated in his fascinating collection of one hundred tales largely from Maddalena about Virgil, not as poet but as a powerful magician. Encouraged by the great Italian scholar Domenico Comparetti, whose book *Vergil in the Middle Ages*[18] is still considered the foremost study of why and how all sorts of tales circulated about Virgil as sorcerer, Leland rewrote forty-six diverse and entertaining tales that portray Virgil as a benevolent and wise man who uses his powers to help downtrodden people and defeat evil sorcerers and kings. Some of the tales are ironic and humorous, especially those in which Virgil teaches the emperor of Rome a lesson or two. There was definitely a part of Leland that identified with Virgil and another part, with people on the margins. In the introduction to his book, he wrote:

> One good reason why I obtained so many of these tales so readily is that they were gathered, like my *Florentine Legends* and *Etrusco-Roman Remains*, chiefly among witches or fortune tellers, who, above all other people, preserve with very natural interest all that smacks of sorcery. It is the case in every

> country—among Red Indians, Hindus or Italians—that wherever there are families in which witchcraft is handed down from generation to generation there will be traditional tales in abundance, and those not of the common fairy-tale kind, but of a mysterious, marvelous nature.[19]

Magic and transformation are key to understanding Leland's reworking of the Native American and Italian tales and his reverence for the storytellers, not that he did not revere the Romani. But it is clear that the magical tales of Indians and witches were related to a profound philosophical if not religious belief in the poetry and power of nature.

Today, if Leland and his works are known at all in America, it is mainly by people interested in witchcraft and witchlore. Some even consider him one of the founders of serious witchcraft studies. His book *Aradia, or The Gospel of the Witches* had a huge impact on the Wiccan movement[20] and remains a significant resource for contemporary witches, especially since Leland himself took witches and shamanism so seriously.

Would Leland, who often resembled a chameleon and assumed so many different identities, have been happy about his renown mainly among followers of witchcraft? Would he have been sad and insulted that his folklore studies have been so neglected? There is really no need to speculate because he led a full and meaningful life, and he left us with a range of folk tales as unique as the man himself.

4

Kurt Schwitters, Politics, and the Merz Fairy Tale

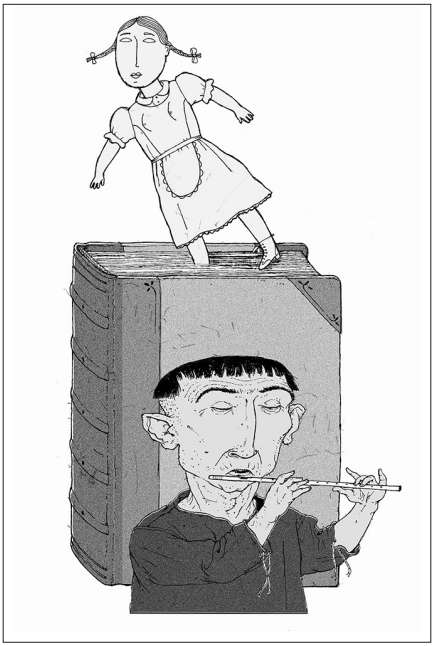

Illustration for Kurt Schwitters's tale "The Swineherd and the Great, Illustrious Writer." (Illustration by Irvine Peacock.)

THE WORD "Merz" had no meaning when I formed it. Now it has the meaning that I have attached to it. The meaning of the concept "Merz" changes as the understanding of the person who continues to work with it changes.

> Merz wants freedom from all fetters in order to shape things artistically. Freedom is not unrestraint, but rather the result of strict artistic discipline. Merz also means tolerance toward any kind of limitation for artistic reasons. Every artist must be permitted to compose a picture, even if it is just made out of blotting paper, provided that he knows how to create.
>
> —KURT SCHWITTERS, "MERZ" (1920)[1]

> Merz is the smile at the grave and seriousness on cheerful occasions.
>
> —KURT SCHWITTERS, *MERZBUCH 1* (1926)

Long before the term "fractured fairy tale" came into use, Kurt Schwitters had turned the fairy tale upside down and inside out. Little is known about his subversive work as a fairy-tale writer, mainly because very few of the tales were published during his lifetime. And even with the publication of his complete writings by the DuMont Verlag in 1974, along with many important scholarly studies of his literary work from 1974 to the present, very little attention has been paid to his innovations in the fairy-tale genre and how his tales relate to his other Merz projects and to the radical fairy-tale work in Germany, especially during the 1920s.

Schwitters had a scurrilous imagination and constantly sought to stretch the borders and forms of art beyond recognition. He delighted in breaking rules and conventions to free the mind. In particular, his fairy tales, which he wrote continually throughout his life, were intended to provoke readers to think outside those socially constructed boxes that, Schwitters felt, constrained the creative potential and temperament of every individual. Unfortunately, most of his unusual tales never reached a large reading public and were never collected and published as a separate book. This situation has now changed with the publication of a large selection of his tales in *Lucky Hans and Other Merz Fairy Tales*, and

I believe that they enable us to see how seriously he was engaged with the fairy-tale genre throughout his life and how he used his tales as aesthetic experiments to convey his wry philosophical and political comments about the illusion of happiness and the need for constant transformation. As an artist, he had greater success and achieved "notoriety" with his poetry, montage work, and theatrical performances. For a while, he even achieved international celebrity. Yet despite this success and his strenuous efforts to promote his art works and theories, he always felt marginalized, and it was from the margins that he created all his Merz art, including his provocative fairy tales that continue to speak to us today.

Schwitters, the artist as rebel and odd man out, was perhaps an unlikely person to play the role of provocateur. And indeed, there was something bizarre about the way he led his life as a demure solid bourgeois gentleman, who loved to dwell at home, and an impulsive radical artist, totally dedicated to his concept of Merz, who traveled about to startle audiences and challenge their "normal" views of life and art. "Merz is a way of viewing the world," Schwitters declared in 1924. "Its essence is absolute uninhibitedness. This is the basis for creation in the meaning of Merz. There are never any inhibitions for the artist in the moment of creation."[2]

The Bourgeois as Rebel

> Dada artists such as George Grosz and Richard Huelsenbeck took painting, sculpture, collage, and modernist poetry—in a word, "Modernism"—at its word.
>
> They insisted that *any*, however violated, adherence to the formal codes salient to those practices necessarily signified an allegiance to Western bourgeois discourses, politics, and values. As such, Schwitters' eccentric deployment and manipulation of Modernist pictorial codes, such as the relationship between line and color, entailed an inevitable rejection from "club Dada."
>
> —JALEH MANSOOR, "KURT SCHWITTERS' MERZBAU: THE DESIRING HOUSE"[3]

I am a painter and I nail my pictures together.

—KURT SCHWITTERS, QUOTED IN HANS RICHTER, *DADA ART AND ANTI-ART*[4]

Born in Hannover, an industrial and conservative snug German city, Schwitters was the only son of a well-to-do middle-class family, which provided him with the stability and leisure he needed to pursue all his artistic interests.[5] Though he was strongly attached to his parents and to Hannover, he had a very ironic view of his family background and Hannover, as his brief curriculum vitae, written in 1920/21, reveals:

> Grandparents Beckemeyer, Hannover. Carpenter. Very solid bourgeois, simple. Grandfather epileptic. Grandmother knew how to make gold out of straw. Thrifty. Only five children. My mother Henriette began earning money very early. As soon as she turned thirteen, she began sewing for a fashionable clothing shop that she managed when she turned seventeen. Very talented musically, poor teeth. She owned her own fashionable clothing shop when she was twenty-one.
>
> Grandfather Schwitters in East Friesland, shoemaker, violent temper. Grandmother Schwitters died early. Second wife. So then, my father had a stepmother. Five brothers and sisters. My father, typhoid fever, apprentice, worked in the clothing business. He specialized in decoration. 1886 own store in Hannover, poor teeth.
>
> I myself was born on June 20, 1887 in Hannover, Veilchen Straße or Violet Street. (The Land of Violets) My wet nurse had milk that was too thick and too little. Since she had to feed me beyond the time legally allowed for breast feeding, she was punished. So, I learned about the evils of the world early through close corporeal experiences. The core of my being, melancholy. Lived in Hannover (Revon) until 1909 except for all kinds of trips all about. I called myself Kuwitter, wet my pants and was locked up in the bathroom. Easter 1894 I went to

> school, then Realgymnasium I. Hannover. So-called gifted student. My grades were low, with the exception of drawing and writing. I enjoyed school. I can't say otherwise. . . . Two years sick [epilepsy], completely unable to work. My interests changed due to the sickness. I realized that I had a love for art. In the beginning I composed couplets in the manner of the variety comedians. On a fall evening with a full moon I was struck by the clear cold moon. From that time on, I began writing sentimental lyrics. Then music seemed to be the art for me. I learned how to read notes and played music the entire afternoon. 1906 I saw a moon-lit landscape for the first time in Isernhagen, and I began to paint. 100 aquarelle moon-lit, naturalistic landscapes. With stearin candle for lighting. I decided to become a painter. The usual objection of parents. First you graduate high school, then you can have our permission. Alongside regular studies I took classes at the school of arts and crafts and gradually became academic. Easter 1908 high school exams and graduation. As we formed a line for graduation, one of my fellow students, Harmening, said, "Don't let the melancholy Schwitters go ahead of us. Otherwise, our march to the podium will resemble a funeral procession."[6]

Though tongue-in-cheek and exaggerated, most of what Schwitters wrote is true. In fact, early in his childhood his parents had occupied a house on Violet Street and then moved to a larger and more comfortable one on Waldhausenstrasse, where Schwitters spent most of his life. (Even after he married Helma Fischer in 1915, he remained with her in this house until 1937.) As a child, he suffered from epilepsy, which continued to plague him as an adult, and despite epileptic attacks that caused him to withdraw from society in his youth, he gradually came out of his shell as he began to study art in Hannover and Dresden after his graduation from high school.

From 1909 until 1919, Schwitters was a serious and, at first, conventional student of painting and architecture at the College of Art

in Dresden. During this time, his parents provided him with the financial support he needed. They had retired from the clothing business and lived off the income of four other houses that they had bought in Hannover. Therefore, Schwitters was able to receive a comprehensive education in all branches of art; he was well trained in landscape and portrait painting, mastered the formal techniques of drawing, and appeared to be heading toward a traditional career as either painter or architect. He eventually became an expert typographer. His life with Helma Fischer was also traditional; she occupied herself with the household and his affairs, while he studied and traveled about. In 1919, they had a son, Ernst, an only child, just as Schwitters had been. However, the orderly veneer of the Schwitters family was always just veneer, for Schwitters had always felt an impulse to play with conventions and rules—not only in public but in his own home, where he built Merz environments.

As early as 1914, with the outbreak of World War I and the great changes that ensued in Germany, Schwitters began to reevaluate his attitudes toward art and society. His artistic inclinations had made him sensitive to authoritarian rule, and his liberal attitudes grew as he realized how the monarchical regime manipulated the German people and caused great misery and catastrophes. Gradually, as was the case with many intellectuals and artists of his class, the wartime experiences and protests by expressionist and Dadaist painters led him to become a quiet critic of the very bourgeois conservatism that harbored him and to begin his own private rebellion as an artist. Though he never participated in political movements and parties, Schwitters was temperamentally a revolutionary, always seeking to question and upset the established views of society, art, and government. He was against the war and despised nationalism of any kind. During the war years, he was at first allowed to continue his art studies in Dresden, where he became increasingly more aware of the expressionist, futurist, cubic, and Dadaist experiments. By 1917, however, he had to interrupt his studies because he was drafted by the military and worked at a

desk job in Hannover for several months. After persistently annoying his superiors, he was discharged from the army and assigned a job as a mechanical draftsman in the Wülfel ironworks outside of Hannover. During this time, he continued to write poetry and experiment with collage and montage paintings.

By 1918, Schwitters had abandoned all interest in traditional art forms and sought to create something new out of the ruins of the war. Vast cultural and political changes throughout Germany had a great impact on his life, even in the conservative city of Hannover. For instance, he began participating in the activities of the Kestner Society, an independent cultural club founded in 1916 to introduce programs and organize exhibits about new tendencies in art and literature for the educated bourgeois public in Hannover. It was in this society, from 1919 through the early 1930s, that Schwitters learned a great deal about avant-garde literature, expressionism, futurism, constructivism, and surrealism, and it was there that he read his own stories, organized Merz events, and prepared special programs. Though not an active participant in the antiwar movement, he felt liberated by the revolutions of 1918 and 1919. He started traveling to Berlin, where he began associating with Herwarth Walden, the leader of the *Sturm* circle, a loose group of expressionist painters and writers who broke with conventional painting and writing and produced some of the most significant artworks of the 1920s. Their journal, *Der Sturm,* was an important publication that promoted their political declarations, poetry, stories, and other writings. Schwitters began publishing in *Der Sturm* as early as 1918, and in Hannover, thanks to Walden, Schwitters made contact with progressive intellectuals and artists who founded such journals as *Der Zweemann* and *Die Pille*. By 1919, Schwitters became a contributor to both magazines and formed a close friendship with Christof Spengemann, the editor of *Der Zweemann* and a left-leaning art critic and social democrat.

Schwitters was literally carried away by all the experimental movements in the arts and, like a sponge, sought to absorb every innovative element generated by radical painters and writers.

When he tried to join the Berlin Dadaists, however, he was rejected because his work was not explicitly political, and he appeared suspicious in their eyes. Richard Huelsenbeck, the leader of the Berlin Dadaists, regarded his dress and behavior as petty bourgeois, and George Grosz disdained him for not declaring his allegiance to engaged political art. But Schwitters was not to be denied. He felt a strong affinity with the work of Dadaist artists and writers and began very early in his writing and painting to move away from the outpourings of the expressionists. Since he could not "officially" call himself a Dadaist, however, he had to find a special name for his new collages and assemblages. Consequently, he invented Merz, which was the designation that he used for the unusual collages, montages, and environments that he began creating out of rubbish and found objects. The term was formed almost by chance from the name *Kommerzbank* and combined the connotation of "commerce" with that of the verb *ausmerzen*, "to eradicate or annihilate." Schwitters sought to rub out vapid traditional forms, rules, and order, and make sense out of ordinary objects that had survived the destructive tendencies of warmongers. In many ways he reutilized material objects and re-formed them to question their use and alleged meaning. If there was sense to life after the end of World War I in 1918, he believed that it was non-sense, for reason had been corrupted and distorted by the cultural and political leaders of the Wilhelminian Empire. Schwitters was fascinated by the common and ordinary artifacts of life that had been ordered by arbitrary social laws and codes, and suggested through his collages that they might be reordered and recomposed to expose the contradictions of imposed forms and laws. Most of all, he reacted against inhibition and the instrumentalization of the imagination, almost as if he were reacting against the stuffy claustrophobic atmosphere of provincial Hannover.

It is important to stress that although Schwitters continued to use the term "Merz" throughout his life, the actual significance of this specific type of artwork covers the period from 1919 to 1922 and had much in common with the radical experiments of the

Weimar period. As Friedhelm Lach has commented, "From a historical perspective Schwitters's different manifestos and statements clearly demonstrate the commonality of the Merz projects. Moreover, we must regard the Merz art in connection with the European art movements from the period before World War I to the stabilization of the society in the post-war period. The artists of this time understood themselves as revolutionaries, who wanted to break out of the confines and containment of the Wilhelminian forms of life. They strived to move beyond the narrow bourgeois-capitalist views to a new and universal openness."[7]

Even though Schwitters lacked the explicit political commitment that the Berlin Dadaists professed and demanded—and there was always tension between him and Huelsenbeck and Grosz—he did not abandon his "radical" campaign to democratize art and foster individual freedom. Merz art did not align itself with a particular political party or theory, but it clearly scrambled forms and laws to challenge viewers to create their own ideas of what art was supposed to mean in light of the social and political conditions of his times. Yet it was not just through painting that Schwitters wanted to make his mark in the world of art, but also through literature, theater, and music. Following the 1919 publication of his famous poem "To Anna Bloom," which dealt with the triteness and banality of sentimental love, Schwitters became famous, if not notorious. It is strange nowadays to grasp why this poem caused such a sensation in Schwitters's time, but it evidently touched a nerve that remained electric during the Weimar period.

To Anna Bloom

Oh You, beloved of my 27 senses, to you I love!
You, yours, you to you, I to you, you to me,——we?
That (incidentally) is beside the point!

Who are you, uncounted lady, you are, are you?
People say, you are.
Let them say it, they don't know how things stand.

You wear your hat on your feet and meander on your hands,
On your hands you meander.
Hallo, your red dress, sliced in white pleats,
Red I love Anna Bloom, red to you I love.
You, yours, you to you, I to you, you to me,———we?
This belongs incidentally to the cold glow!
Anna Bloom, red Anna Bloom, what are the people saying?

Prize question:
1) Anna Bloom has a screw loose.
2) Anna Bloom is red.
3) What color is the screw.

Blue is the color of your blonde hair.
Red is the color of your green screw.
You simple girl in your everyday dress,
You lovely green beast, to you my love!
You, yours, you to you, I to you, you to me,———we?
That belongs incidentally to the—glow box.

Anna Bloom, Anna, A———N———N———A!
I trickle your name.
Your name drips like soft tallow.
You know it, Anna, you already know it,
One can read you from behind.
And you, you most glorious of all,
You are from behind as from the front.
A————N————N————A
Tallow trickles STROKING my back.
Anna Bloom,
You dripping beast,
To You————I————love![8]

Conventional love is transformed into an unconventional and ungrammatical declaration of babble, and from this point on, Schwitters was to lead a conventionally ungrammatical life. From 1919 until approximately 1930, Schwitters collaborated with

progressive groups in Hannover to organize shocking Merz events that prefigured contemporary performance art. He also served as a manager of art exhibits by avant-garde painters and writers and collaborated with groups throughout Europe. Among his closest friends and collaborators were some of the most important Dadaists of the Weimar period: Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara, and Katherine Dreier influenced him, worked with him, or helped him produce shows and events. Dreier, an American artist, was particularly important because she made him known in America. A member of the group Abstract Création in New York, she studied painting in Paris, Munich, and London from 1907 to 1914, and when she returned to the States, she founded Société Anonyme in New York with Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia to promote modern art, especially Dadaism, and to establish contacts with avant-garde European painters. When traveling in Europe in 1920, she discovered Schwitters's work and then virtually became his patron saint in America; she arranged for several showings of his collages from 1923 to 1942.

Schwitters himself traveled widely in Germany and Europe to exhibit his collages and paintings and to perform his poetry and other skits, often with music and impromptu recitals. Since his parents had lost most of their money due to the inflation that followed World War I, Schwitters had to earn his own keep and supported himself and his family by selling his collages, performing, and writing short articles or stories. To make money—and Schwitters was always frugal—he published unusual fairy tales, grotesques, and poems in newspapers throughout the 1920s, and with his friends Kate Steinitz, a gifted artist who had moved with her husband to Hannover in 1914, and Theo van Doesburg, the brilliant founder of the De Stijl movement in the Netherlands, he tried producing fairy-tale books for children composed with unusual typography. The experimental publications they produced during this time were *Hahnenpeter* (Peter the Rooster, 1924), *Die Märchen vom Paradies* (The Fairy Tales of Paradise, 1924–25), and *Die Scheuche* (The Scarecrow, 1925).

Schwitters had already been writing and reciting his fairy tales for adult audiences, and when Steinitz paid him a social call one time in 1924, he spontaneously began telling a children's story about Peter the rooster. Steinitz recorded it with her typewriter and added illustrations, and he focused on the typography. By this time, he had already attained a great command of typography because of his interest in the futurists' experiments and his own inclination to explore the meanings of letters and printed words. Schwitters wanted to liberate words and sounds and transform them on paper so that they could produce diverse meanings. He and Steinitz worked together to resolve problems of form and function in the use of type and image. The story itself was simple and concerned the boy Ernst, Schwitters's son, who wanted to visit Peter the rooster and the rooster man in paradise. Once the story came out in Schwitters's Merz journal, which he had recently founded, and as a separate book, he and Steinitz decided to add a sequel, *The Fairy Tales of Paradise,* which was printed in their new publishing house, Aposs. Steinitz has explained how this name came about: "I worried lest the name Merz would become a sword that would pierce *Fairy Tales* and me and pin us both down. The Merz label would certainly prejudice teachers (not children) against these new fairy tales for our times. But, meanwhile, a wonderful new pressmark had occurred to us. It had to be used. 'Aposs'! A = active; P = paradox; OS = oppose sentimentality; S = sensitive. A wonderful motto! A useful umbrella for many occasions."[9]

No sooner had *The Fairy Tales of Paradise* been published than Theo van Doesburg and his wife, Nelly, arrived in Hannover. Van Doesburg prompted Schwitters to produce another tale, "The Scarecrow." This time, all three—Steinitz, van Doesburg, and Schwitters—collaborated in a unique fashion: they employed only letters and different font sizes to create the illustrations. Fortunately, they also had the help of a gifted typesetter, Paul Vogt, who was able to adjust the forms and sizes of the letters to fit the bizarre narrative. Though not written in verse, the letters create a

rhythmic beat so that the tale reads like a poem. Of course, none of the three books sold well. The artists were way ahead of their times.

Without a good reception and the possibility to attract a public, Schwitters lost interest in these ventures and found that he would be better off by performing skits and stories, including fairy tales and grotesques, which were not published during his lifetime. In addition, he continued to paint and create unusual collages, lectured on art and art history, and gave art lessons. And he transformed parts of the large house on Waldhausenstrasse into a Merz environment where he held monthly soirées with Merz performances as often as he could.

Schwitters was totally dedicated to Merz, yet he kept altering his conceptual views of art and moved beyond his Dadaist phase to experiment with cubism, constructivism, Bauhaus designs, and Neue Sachlichkeit. But throughout all his experimentation, there was one governing principle: the spontaneous use and appreciation of all art forms and objects of life to free the imagination from the senseless and banal legislation of life. Complete personal liberty was his utopian ideal—which is not to say that he was a libertarian, for Schwitters had a strong social and political consciousness and realized that society had to be changed if personal liberty and happiness were to thrive, a theme that appears often in his fairy tales. But he believed first and foremost in the power of art to respond to arbitrary strictures and structures by making nonsense out of them so that there might be a regeneration of life.

As he grew older, however, his total dedication to art was challenged and compelled to undergo a moderate transformation. As an only child, Schwitters had always received special treatment by his parents, and he was extremely self-centered and often unaware of how he used his wife and son to further his artistic career. To be sure, he was devoted to Helma and Ernst and knew that he could not create and live the more "bohemian" life that he led in the outside world without their support. But when Germany began to alter in the late 1920s, especially with the Great Depression in 1929, and his artwork was not as enthusiastically appreciated as at the

beginning of the Weimar Republic, Schwitters became more melancholy and cynical, especially when he realized that neither Merz nor any kind of art would liberate German society.

When the Nazis gained control of the government in the 1930s, he did not believe that they would remain in power very long and thought he could continue producing his artworks. But the Nazis disdained artists like Schwitters. In 1934, they ceremoniously burned his books and dismissed his art as filth. Though he tried to maintain his lifestyle in Hannover and continued to give Merz performances in his home, he gradually realized that he could not go on making public appearances or creating and selling his art without risking his life. Moreover, his son, Ernst, who was a vehement antifascist, had refused to join the Hitler Youth organization and was in constant danger of being arrested. In 1937, Ernst had to flee Hannover for his life. He went to Norway, where the family had spent several vacations, and Schwitters soon followed. Helma was left to protect the Merz home, their respective parents, and their property in Hannover. That very same year, after Schwitters had left Germany, the Nazis organized an enormous art exhibition notoriously called "Decadent Art" (*Entartete Kunst*), containing some of the greatest works of early twentieth-century expressionist, Dadaist, surrealist, and abstract painters. Some of Schwitters's works were included and, ironically, labeled complete nonsense. Helma traveled back and forth to Norway to help Schwitters and to spend time with her husband and son, who lived under dire conditions. They did not have work permits, and many Norwegians considered them Nazi spies. Helma began making plans to join them, and the family thought about emigrating to America, but these plans were dashed by the outbreak of World War II in 1939. In fact, Schwitters and Ernst had barely settled down in Norway when they were forced to flee to England in 1940 because of the German invasion. Helma remained stuck in Hannover, while Schwitters and Ernst almost perished as they made their way from village to village and from fishing boat to fishing boat until they arrived safely in England.

Schwitters was interned in different camps in Scotland and England until he was transferred to one named Hutchinson on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. Schwitters, who had been depressed for several years, felt at home with the other German refugees because he could perform skits, give art lessons, and draw portraits. The refugees, many of them gifted artists, intellectuals, and engineers, formed a tiny university. Schwitters was not as despondent as he had been in Norway. When he was released in late 1941, he lived with his son in London for a while and tried to resume his career as a Merz artist. However, despite help from many friends both in England and abroad, the famous art critic Herbert Read among them, he could not earn a living that way and resorted to painting portraits and landscapes. During the war, he managed to stay in touch with Helma and his mother, but he had numerous mood swings. Always dependent on the emotional support of women, he formed a long-term relationship in 1942 with a younger woman, Edith Thomas, who was working in a government office at that time. Despite this relationship, he missed Helma and worried about her—with good reason. In 1944, the Merz house in Hannover and the other Schwitters properties were destroyed in a bombing raid. Helma developed cancer and died that same year; his mother passed away in 1945. Poor and sick, Schwitters moved with Edith Thomas to Ambleside in the Lake District, and while earning a living as a landscape painter, he endeavored to transform a barn into a Merz structure and to do experimental work with his writing and art on the side. He refused to let his physical ailments, including a brain hemorrhage, stop him. His heart finally gave out in January 1948, and Schwitters died, left out of Germany and left out of the world art scene.

Merz Fairy Tales

> One day the chute in the ceiling [of the Molling factory in Hannover] suddenly opened and a mountain of paper came down. Standing safely at the door with the children, I watched as the avalanche hit

> Kurt Schwitters, threatening to bury him alive. He stood bent over, defending himself against the onslaught. Then, raising his head, he stood up in the midst of the rubbish, a new Gargantua, twisting and dancing in the whirl of papers. In both arms he held paper, paper, paper. Around his feet lumps, scraps, and buckets of wastepaper swirled. Kurt Schwitters groaned and laughed. Finally he emerged—alive.
>
> —KATE TRAUMAN STEINITZ, *KURT SCHWITTERS: A PORTRAIT FROM LIFE*

Left out, but not forgotten, for Schwitters reentered the art world after his death through the dedicated efforts of Edith Thomas, his son, Ernst, and other devoted admirers of his work. It did not happen right away, but Schwitters gradually regained his standing as a great avant-garde artist and enjoyed a more central role in the history of art, instead of being allocated to the margins. Among the papers discovered after his death were numerous fairy tales, grotesques, and stories that had never seen the light of day while he was alive. Many were drafts, and it is clear that if he had not been forced to flee Germany and to labor under poor health and difficult circumstances, he might have polished and honed many of his tales. Despite their roughness and incompleteness, however, they are incisive if not disturbing reflections of his life and times, and they incorporate radical notions of the fairy tale as an art form. Schwitters had a biting sense of humor and a strong desire to tear down and recompose traditional forms. His reshaping of the classical fairy-tale structure and his critique of the false illusions of happiness perpetuated by traditional tales coincided with a radical approach taken by many other German writers and artists during the Weimar period.[10] In his particular case, Schwitters's innovations were based on his theory of Merz, which urged artists to decompose what is commonly held to be logical and sensible composition while creating new and unusual works that denied categorization and enabled the reader or viewer to glimpse alternatives to static lifestyles and thinking.

Schwitters was not alone in his endeavors to change the form and function of the fairy tale during the Weimar period.[11] Right after the revolutionary years of 1918 and 1919, communist and socialist writers sought to influence children and adults by publishing highly subversive and original political fairy tales, fables, and stories that experimented with the style and ideology of traditional tales. Several anthologies with political poems, tales, and stories appeared at the onset of the Weimar Republic, such as *Proletarischer Kindergarten* (Proletarian Kindergarten, 1921), edited by Ernst Friedrich, and *Pflug und Saat* (Plow and Sow, 1923), edited by Arthur Wolf. Most important were the two series of fairy tales produced by the Malik publishing house in Berlin, which had ties to the Communist Party, and the Verlagsanstalt für proletarische Freidenker in Dresden and Leipzig, which represented a radical movement against organized religion. Under the direction of Wieland Herzefelde, who employed gifted Dadaist artists such as Georg Grosz and John Heartfield to illustrate the books, Malik published a series titled "Märchen der Armen" (Fairy Tales of the Poor), which included Hermynia Zur Mühlen's *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (*What Little Peter's Friends Tell Him*, 1921), Eugen Lewin-Dorsch's *Die Dollarmännchen* (The Little Men's Dollars, 1923), and Maria Szucisch's *Silavus* (1923). The leading person behind the Verlagsanstalt für proletarische Freidenker, Arthur Wolf, was committed to publishing artistic books of high quality that were socialist and critical of religion. He was responsible for the following collections of fairy tales: Jozsef Lengyel's *Sternekund und Reinekund* (1923), Maria Szucisch's *Die Träume des Zauberbuchs* (The Dreams of the Magic Book, 1923), and Béla Illès's *Rote Märchen* (Red Fairy Tales, 1924). In addition to these writers, who explicitly wrote politically didactic fairy tales, there were numerous others, such as Joachim Ringelnatz, Franz Hessel, Mynona (Salmo Friedlaender), Ödön von Horváth, Kurt Tucholsky, Béla Balázs, Georg Kaiser, and Alfred Döblin, who were less didactic. Others wrote innovative fairy tales and startling parodies, sometimes called grotesques, throughout the 1920s. Their tales were

much more complex and avant-garde. Yet, most of these writers, like Schwitters, took political positions somewhere on the left. They wrote primarily for adults and sought to explode the illusions of the canonical Grimms' fairy tales and to question whether "happiness" was possible in a society that had become so contentious and violent.

Although the Weimar period, 1919–1933, is often thought to be one of the most progressive eras in German history—and it certainly was—it was also one of the most turbulent. When the republic was founded in 1919, it was not recognized by numerous right-wing groups, and civil war and hyperinflation caused immense problems until the currency reform brought about by the chancellor, Gustav Stressemann, in 1923. Even though there were democratic reforms and remarkable accomplishments in the arts and sciences, right-wing groups, industrialists, and the army constantly attempted to undermine the social democratic party and the new republic. Assassinations, murders, bloody battles, corrupt courts, and protest marches were common. The conflicts were not only between right-wing and left-wing parties; there was also internal strife among the many different socialist groups and communists. From the very beginning of the Weimar Republic, these differences were apparent, and they were played out in the expressionist, dadaist, futurist and surrealist movements. Since Germans have always had a special affinity and strong predilection for fairy tales, whether for young or old, the creation of new fairy tales to address and reflect the turbulent times became an even more significant means of voicing opinion.

It is impossible to say whether Schwitters was acquainted with the radical fairy-tale experiments, and yet it seems unlikely he did not read some of them or see some of the illustrations. Lach informs us that Schwitters "had ample opportunity to hear something about old and new fairy tales in the Hannover Kestner Society from 1920 onward. Lectures on European and Oriental fairy tales were held there many times. On March 5, 1920, Vilma Mönckeberg spoke about 'European and exotic fairy tales.' On

December 18, 1922, an evening was dedicated to Oriental fairy tales by Ilse von Kamphoevener. Aside from these lectures, the society organized readings in which modern authors presented their fairy tales and grotesques."[12] They were part of the cultural climate. Every art form was being tested and transformed in highly innovative ways during the Weimar period. Schwitters associated with some of the illustrators and writers of political fairy tales and spent a good deal of his time in Berlin, where most of the innovations were occurring. In fact, he was very familiar with the endeavors to "proletarianize" art, and he had clear opinions about this movement called the prolet cult. It has often been said that Schwitters was "apolitical," but this is a misleading description. If anything, he had well-defined political views and was more clear-sighted about the situation in the Weimar period than many of the so-called political artists.

In 1923, Schwitters signed a pamphlet titled "Manifest Proletkunst" (Manifesto Proletarian Art) with the artists Theo van Doesburg, Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara, and Christof Spengemann. Part of it reads:

> Art should awaken the creative forces in a person only with its own means. Its goal is the mature individual, not the proletarian or the bourgeois. Only people with little talent can produce something like proletarian art (that is, politics in a painted condition) due to their limitations and lack of culture. However, the artist refuses to have anything to do with the special field of social organization.
>
> Art, as we want it, art is neither proletarian nor bourgeois, for it develops forces that are strong enough to influence the entire culture instead of allowing itself to be influenced by social relations.
>
> The proletariat is a condition that must be overcome. The bourgeoisie is a condition that must be overcome. In that the proletarians with their prolet cult imitate the bourgeois cult, they are the ones who support this bespoiled culture of the

> bourgeoisie without being aware of what they are doing—to the detriment of art and to the detriment of culture. . . . Communism is already a bourgeois affair anyway just as majority socialism is, namely, capitalism in a new form. The bourgeoisie uses the apparatus of communism, which was invented not by the proletariat but by the bourgeoisie, only as a means of renovation for its own rotten culture (Russia). Consequently, the proletariat does not fight for art nor for the future new life, but rather for the bourgeoisie. Every proletarian artwork is nothing but a poster for the bourgeoisie.
>
> On the other hand, what we are preparing is the complete artwork that is above all posters, whether they are made for champagne, Dada, or a communist dictatorship.[13]

In other short essays or notes in his personal papers, Schwitters wrote devastating critiques of nationalism and religion. In this regard, the fairy tales that he created in German and English from 1923 until his death form a composite picture of his philosophical and political views. To be sure, Schwitters had a dark view of politics, and he employed an ironic style to engage with politics in his fairy tales. For instance, in his wry tale "He," written in 1923 and published in 1927 in *Der Sturm*, he recounts how an anonymous young man, simply called He, is recruited by the army and continues to expand and grow into an enormous creature, even though his superiors arrest him and demand that he stop growing. All their ridiculous efforts and plans fail, and the only way the blundering general and king can prevent his growth is by ordering him to die by suicide, which he does and thus brings about a "happy" end. Schwitters wrote this macabre fairy tale as a grim comment on the inflationary period that was out of control in Germany and also on the stupidity of the commanding officers in the German army.

In another one of his early stories, "Lucky Hans," Schwitters depicts a young man, unemployed and starving, who catches a rabbit to eat. After the rabbit jumps out of its fur and escapes nude into the forest, Hans puts on the fur and earns a lot of money as a

circus performer because he is mistaken for a polar bear with a human head. Then there is one banal misunderstanding after another, and Hans demonstrates that he can be just as opportunistic and shrewd as his next competitor. His greatest accomplishment is to outwit a rich banker and marry his foolish daughter. Clearly, Schwitters mocks the rise of the poor, typical fairy-tale hero named Hans, whose wealth and happiness at the end of the tale are shallow and vapid. Written during the "golden" days of the Weimar period, when everything was in flux and a new bourgeoisie was on the rise, the tale represents the demise rather than the rise of culture.

In two other pointed political tales, "The Fish and the Ship's Propeller" and "The Two Brothers," both written in 1938, one year after Schwitters was forced into exile in Norway, he critiques conformity and sadism. In "The Fish and the Ship's Propeller," he satirizes the little fish, who at first make fun of a fat fish and then show their fickleness, by quickly changing their attitude after he saves them. Their acclamation of the fat fish as their savior and king is similar to the German people's celebration of Hitler. In "The Two Brothers," Schwitters alludes to the havoc caused by the Nazis who destroyed Germany's land and humanistic legacy. The brutal brother's treatment of the oak, the land, and his family is clearly a reference to the sadistic and ignorant manner in which the Nazis brought about the destruction of their country and also themselves. Toward the end of his life, Schwitters continued to speak out against conformity in "The Flat and the Round Painter," one of the few tales that he wrote in English. He could not abide the conventional life and could not tolerate intolerance.

His experiments with fairy tales are a good example of how free association trumped repressive formation and regulation. "The Scarecrow," which he wrote, designed, and composed with Steinitz and van Doesburg in 1925, is revolutionary in form and content. The "pretentious scarecrow" in his top hat, tux, cane, and lace scarf is not what he seems to be, an elegant, authoritarian figure or a competent scarecrow. There is literally and "letteraly" a barnyard rebellion against his position by the cock, hens, and farm boy so

that he is decomposed as a fraud, a figure made up of stolen acquisitions. In the end, his decomposition generates brightness. Of course, this nonsensical tale can be read in many different ways, but the political tendency is clear and lies in the rebellious movement and sophisticated irony of the typography and letters.

All of Schwitters's fairy tales have a political "touch," so to speak, and often his targets of parody are the upper classes that, he contended, were arrogant, materialist, and hypocritical. In a highly amusing tale written during his Norwegian exile in 1938, "He Who Is Mentally Retarded," he depicts a so-called "idiot," who exposes the hypocrisy of all the fishermen and villagers. His cunning honesty triumphs over the deceit of profiteers. In two other later tales, written during the 1940s, "The Fairy Tale about Happiness" and "What Is Happiness?," he pokes fun at religion and the naiveté, if not stupidity, of angels to demonstrate that the pursuit of happiness is banal. In the first tale, which Schwitters left unfinished, the angel is totally unaware of how social class determines one's spiritual condition; in the second tale, Schwitters alludes to war and fascism and how an angel, in pursuit of happiness, is oblivious to the suffering of people on earth.

It is fair to say that Schwitters was obsessed by the notion of happiness in his fairy tales, and this obsession was closely connected to his own melancholy disposition and his philosophy of Merz. In 1926, he wrote an important ideological declaration about Merz that can be traced throughout his fairy tales:

> *Contemporary Art Is the Future of Art*
>
> Merz is a standpoint that everyone can use. It is from this standpoint that all people can consider not only art but all things, that is, the world. For me, Merz has become a world view. I can no longer change my standpoint. My standpoint is Merz. It became this way during a decade of work. I ask the reader here not to be angry with me because I am writing so much about myself, but the development of the thought behind Merz is closely bound up with my personal development and is

inseparable from it. If one compares the influence of Merz in greater circles here and there in the world, as, for example, strangely and especially in groups, where the magazine MA seems to be entirely Merz, then, as far as I know, my followers have not contributed anything essentially new or important to the development.

For the standpoint that I call Merz, there are three requirements:

1. Human beings cannot create anything in accordance with the spirit of the almighty divinity. They cannot create nothing out of nothing, rather they can merely create out of definite givens, out of definite material. The act of human creating is only a process of forming that which is given.
2. Perfection [completeness] cannot be attained by human beings.
3. In his work the artist seeks to strive only for that which he can attain.

Added to that comes the serious striving to make everything so good, so honest, so open and so logical as possible. The result from all this is Merz.

Merz is the smile at the grave and seriousness on cheerful occasions.[14]

Much of what people endeavored to make out of their lives seemed senseless to Schwitters, and much of what social and political institutions imposed was senseless. His fairy tales are fascinating variations on this theme: the nonsensical pursuit of happiness in a world that is senseless. If perfection or completeness was impossible, then it was ridiculous to try to accumulate money, beauty, or even wisdom. This is the clear message in the bitter ironic tale "Happiness," in which a gypsy grants the three wishes of three sisters, who wish badly. The third sister is the only one who succeeds in finding a modicum of happiness because she frees

herself of human desires. In 1927, Schwitters wrote a brief essay titled "Glück oder Unglück" about happiness or misfortune, or luck and misfortune, and it begins with the assertion that luck and/or happiness "occupies many people's minds, but very few know it. I frequently heard someone saying that he didn't have luck. Others always had a good deal of luck, but he didn't. These people don't know luck (happiness), especially not when they assert that they are plagued by misfortune. Because luck and misfortune are the same. Chance is both, and it changes a person through what happens. People initially assume that chance may be luck or misfortune and only realize much later that chance is heading in a different direction. Everyone is aware of the banal fact that luck can change into misfortune, or vice versa, because it is the same thing."[15]

Paradoxically, Schwitters believed that happiness could be found only by not searching for it, as he makes clear in another ironic tale, "The Three Wishes" (1936), in which a man seeks happiness and makes three dumb wishes only to learn that happiness lies within him. In reality, for Schwitters, the notion of happiness was delusion. Only by doing something can one gain a sense of happiness, for autonomous action, especially creating, brings about self-knowledge. Wealth, beauty, love, or marriage cannot produce happiness. It is through words and images that the individual composes and decomposes against a social background, or rather within a sociocultural context, that happiness might be detected. In "The Swineherd and the Great, Illustrious Writer," the very first tale that Schwitters published in 1925, he announced and demonstrated his Merz philosophy concerned with happiness. It is only by creating, transforming, and re-creating that both protagonists, the writer and the swineherd, the subject of the writer's masterpiece, become serene and content. Try as he might in his composing and recomposing the swineherd, the great illustrious writer cannot write a masterpiece. He cannot bring his work to perfection, and he cannot satisfy the swineherd because he cannot fulfill traditional expectations. Yet, in the end, the writer attains a sense of serenity because he knows what can or cannot be accomplished.

The emphasis on achieving self-knowledge through incompletion is the overriding motif in all of Schwitters's collages, plays, short stories, and paintings. There is a Sisyphus quality to his thinking and artwork. Schwitters, like Sisyphus, never tired of rolling the rock up the hill only to see the rock tumble back down again just as he was about to reach the top. If the world is nonsensical and banal, and if people are somewhat inane, the artist has no choice but to depict this absurdity and struggle against the social logic that constantly proves to be illogical. The best the artist can hope for is autonomy and self-knowledge through the creative process of reorganizing the ordinary to understand its extraordinary quality and to impress upon viewers and readers how incomplete the world is.

The techniques that Schwitters used in composing his collages are similar to the style and compositional techniques of his writing. His collages bring together common elements of daily life that are rearranged to generate new meaning. Forms and figures are reassembled, compelling viewers to rethink the world—that is, to rethink how the forms and figures have customarily been used or abused. Schwitters's collages are acts of salvation that provoke and seek to liberate the viewer from convention and to provide a certain subversive joy. His fairy tales are no different.

Schwitters favored paratactic sentences that appear to be logically causal and yet produce baffling contradictions or silliness. Two good examples are "Fish and Man" and "A King without People," in which the succinct sentences build upon one another often without transition or causality. They are like separate articles or utterances stuck together in such an unconventional and extraordinary way that they produce new connections and form a startling narrative. Patrizia McBride has aptly summarized Schwitters's method: "Schwitters's montage principle entails an assault on the linear unfolding of discourse, which is constantly interrupted by parenthetical inserts that either provide a commentary or contain seemingly unrelated disparate linguistic material. This practice corresponds to Schwitters's characterization of abstract montage as a process aimed at establishing novel, unconventional

relations among existing elements. The nonsense produced in this way does not make the impression of chaos, however, but instead unfolds in a highly methodical way, engendering a coherent, parallel universe to sense."[16]

It is debatable whether Schwitters's tales are "parallel universes." They are, in my opinion, more like explosives that shatter closed minds and closed genres. They are closely connected to the "ridiculous" in art that Theodor Adorno discusses in *Aesthetic Theory*: "The divergence of the constructive and the mimetic, which no artwork can resolve and which is virtually the original sin of aesthetic spirit, has its correlative in that element of the ridiculous and clownish that even the most significant works bear and that, unconcealed, is inextricable from their significance. The inadequacy of classicism of any persuasion originates in its repression of this element; a repression that art must mistrust. The progressive spiritualization of art in the name of maturity only accentuates the ridiculous all the more glaringly; the more the artwork's own organization assimilates itself to a logical order by virtue of its inner exactitude, the more obvious the difference between the artwork's logicity and the logicity that governs empirically becomes the parody of the latter; the more reasonable the work becomes in terms of its formal constitution, the more ridiculous it becomes according to the standard of empirical reason. Its ridiculousness is, however, also part of a condemnation of empirical rationality; it accuses the rationality of social praxis of having become an end in itself and as such the irrational and mad reversal of means into ends."[17]

Schwitters's "ridiculous" fairy tales (and montages) carry within their ludic structure a powerful condemnation of the instrumentalization of rationality. They are also a strong and mocking critique of the hierarchy of art and society and the values that are logically proclaimed to be pure and authentic. There is no legitimacy to a king in a realm where nothing is real or legitimately established. All of Schwitters's tales, collages, and performances are silly. Yet they explode the repressed elements of experience and

art. Adorno also asserts that "ridiculousness is the residue of the mimetic in art, the price of its self-enclosure. In his condemnation of this element, the philistine always has an ignominious measure of justification. The ridiculous, as a barbaric residuum of something alien to form, misfires in art if art fails to reflect and shape it."[18] It was to Schwitters's credit that he always played with and shaped the ridiculous and endowed it with a seriousness that questioned the artificiality of high art and the pretensions of the philistines and bourgeoisie. If art demanded uninhibited play with forms and ideas, and if art demanded a smile, Schwitters was its most dedicated disciple.

Taken as a whole, Schwitters's fairy tales indicate how he grappled with social, artistic, and political problems throughout his mature life. They reflect how he kept his humor in times of great social and personal change. As experiments with the ridiculous, they are earnest endeavors to reform the fairy tale and refocus public attention (and his own) on the disturbing social changes that were having devastating effects on lives. Schwitters never completed his monumental Merz environments in Germany, Norway, and England, and he never perfected his fairy tales. And yet they continue to live on and resonate as traces of remarkable protest artworks created by an artist who refused to yield to the pernicious forces that endanger the creative spirit of humanity. The very openness and asymmetrical arrangements of his Merz fairy tales that questioned the barbaric and banal arrangements of civilization in his time still challenge us today to question why and how we make our social and political arrangements without thinking about their consequences.

5

Béla Balázs, the Homeless Wanderer, or, The Man Who Sought to Become One with the World

The emperor dressed in his cloak. (Illustration by Mariette Lydis.)

EVERYTHING IS the symbol and fate of the soul. *Everything is the same stuff:* feeling and landscape, the thought and the events of life, dream, and reality that are happening around me. Everything is *one* stuff because everything is in the same kind of way the fate of the

> soul and its revelation, and *it exists*!!!. . . . *That's why I write fairy tales*. Now I can explain it. Through its form the fairy tale symbolizes that the glass mountain at the end of the world doesn't bring dualism into my world. The fairy tale is also here on this side. This feeling of unity could also be the conscience of the new culture.
>
> —BÉLA BALÁZS, LETTER TO GEORG LUKÁCS (MAY 1910)[1]

Recognized internationally as one of the foremost film critics and filmmakers in the early days of cinema, and famous for writing the libretto for Béla Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle* in 1911, Béla Balázs was also a prolific writer of fairy tales and a political activist who often compromised his ideals to survive the turbulent years he spent in exile, first in Austria and Germany during the 1920s and then in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. He was not an easy man, but the times were not easy on him. One of his biographers, Joseph Zsuffa summarizes his life as follows:

> Béla Balázs was a complex character: a romantic and a utopian, a votary of materialism but also of mysticism, intrepid yet beset by cosmic fears, passionate yet gentle, most of all an eternal idealist. He lived in constant creative fervor, turning out cultural-philosophical essays, poems, short stories, art criticism, novels, plays, librettos, socio-political commentary, film scripts, and fables for adults and children. At times, he was so tired that he cried from exhaustion. Balázs traveled a great deal, first for the pleasure of seeing the world and quenching his thirst for knowledge, later out of necessity, forced to live the life of an exile, and—toward the end of his life—driven by a desire to share his cinematic vision, in East and West, with filmmakers and film viewers alike.[2]

What Zsuffa fails to recognize, however, is that Balázs was obsessed by fairy tales throughout his life, and that his life assumed the contours of the typical fairy-tale hero, the troubled young man who goes out to seek his fortune in the world. In Balázs's case, however, he desperately wanted to become at one with an ideal world to which he could belong with heart and soul. Though he fought valiantly for his goal, he continually suffered bitter setbacks and often behaved callously. In the end, Balázs was still struggling and longing for utopian fulfillment when he died. If he found some hope and contentment, it was only as a writer and through his art. Throughout his long and solitary journey, he managed to produce unusual, mystifying fairy tales that did not mince words about the cruelty in the world, the twists of fate, and the courage and integrity that people needed to confront and transcend unjust conditions in chaotic Europe.

> It is true that I proclaimed the synthesis of the nations, the European man. . . . It is true that I always felt my deepest metaphysical roots to be beyond every race and nation and I knew myself to be a wanderer, solitary. . . . It is true that according to my biological lineage, I am a Jew; thus, there is no more Turanian blood in me than there was in Sándor Petófi[3]. . . . And yet, what hurts? Why do I feel myself to be an exile?
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> —BÉLA BALÁZS, *DIARY* (1920)[4]

Béla Balázs (pseudonym for Herbert Bauer) was born into a secular Hungarian Jewish family on August 4, 1884, in Szeged, the second most important cultural city in Hungary. His parents, Simon Bauer and Jenny Levy, were teachers, and German was spoken at home, in part because Jenny Levy was from a German Jewish family in East Prussia, but also because German was their "culture," so to speak. Balázs's father translated Goethe and Schiller, and both parents felt part of the German cultural tradition. Simon Bauer had studied in Vienna and Berlin before receiving his PhD

from the University of Budapest. His first teaching position was at a gymnasium in Szeged, where he was active in liberal circles, regarded as a conscientious and dedicated teacher, and had plans eventually to become a professor in Budapest. However, in 1890, Bauer criticized and offended a Cistercian priest, his superior at his school, during an examination in which the priest had treated a poor student unfairly. Bauer refused to repent his courageous behavior, and as punishment, was banished to Löcse, a provincial town in the far north of the country, where he was cut off from intellectual stimulation and had virtually no contact with a Jewish community or important intellectual circles.

By this time, Balázs had a sister, Hilda, born in 1885, and a brother, Ervin, born in 1890, and he attended a German Lutheran elementary school. Whereas his parents detested Löcse and felt that they had been sentenced to a life in prison, Balázs was thrilled by the change in landscape and developed a love for the mountains that reminded him of fabulous scenes from fairy tales and picture books. He often took trips into the countryside to explore the mysterious world around him and felt at one with nature. However, this feeling of unity was rarely maintained, and if anything, Balázs felt more and more isolated if not ostracized from his Hungarian compatriots. Neither of his parents was religious, yet his father brought him secretly once a year to a minion on Yom Kippur to participate in a service that was anathema to Balázs. He was not permitted to participate in religion class at school because he was Jewish; during these lessons, he was sent home, where he learned little more about Jewish culture or religion. In fact, Balázs's early years were marked by feelings of loneliness, marginalization, and trauma. Just as conditions appeared to be improving for his family in 1897, his father died suddenly from stomach cancer. That very same year, his mother, who had not worked in Löcse, relocated the family to Szeged, where she began teaching once again, while Balázs attended the high school.

Although he felt at ease in Szeged and took frequent trips into the countryside to become better acquainted with peasant life,

Balázs did not have many friends and spent hours at home, where he voraciously read the classics and important contemporary writers in German, French, and Hungarian. During his adolescence, he had an unrequited love for Eszter Löw, the beautiful daughter of the city's leading rabbi, and she encouraged him to read Rilke's poems and J. P. Jacobsen's neoromantic novel *Niels Lyhne.* By the time he turned sixteen, he had begun writing a diary that he was to maintain on and off until his death. He had also decided that he wanted to become a writer and published some of his poetry in a local newspaper for the first time under the pseudonym Béla Balázs. The poems were written in Hungarian—a language that he was urged to learn, but not the way that Jews supposedly mangled it—and since the name Herbert Bauer seemed too German if not too Jewish, the young man was encouraged to adopt a pen name and kept using both Bauer and Balázs until he died. He was called Herbert Bauer only by intimate friends. His ambivalence toward his given name and heritage reflected the dilemma that he shared with numerous middle-class Jewish intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Hanno Loewy has remarked,

> Balázs's writing begins with the crisis that intellectuals experienced at the threshold of the twentieth century. The suffering from alienation motivated Balázs's tireless quest for a means of expression, a quest whose craze for experimentation reveled in romantic anti-rationalism and at the same time tested itself in various medias, genres and types. . . . The restlessness of this quest revealed a deeply seated insecurity about the relations between human beings (felt as the social reification of domination) and between human beings and God (profanation), between human beings and their bodies (objectification), between human beings and things (dis-enchantment), and finally also about the alienation between the artist and the masses (the aestheticism that was suspected everywhere as being l'art pour l'art). This insecurity received its full and specific coloring by an entire generation of Jewish intellectuals from the assimilated

> bourgeoisie, who were stranded in Hungary at the turn of the century (and not only in Hungary) halfway between emancipation and anti-Semitism, growing more and more radical, in a kind of social no man's land. These intellectuals endeavored to resolve all this through conversion and cultural and political engagement in the society and found themselves simultaneously excluded by society.[5]

Confused about his identity but sensing that change was in the wind, the young Balázs worked assiduously to become a true Hungarian and felt a deep yearning to be at one with the Hungarian people. Clearly a gifted writer, he intended to demonstrate through his art where he belonged. With this goal in mind, he enrolled at the University of Budapest in 1902 after winning a scholarship.

Balázs's arrival in Budapest coincided with a great cultural renaissance. Hungary's fate had been tied to the Austro-Hungarian Empire—that is, to Austria and Germany. However, as the rising Hungarian middle class became stronger, more prosperous, and better educated, various groups formed heterogeneous political movements for independence and cultural rebirth. Along with a call for "authentic" and original Hungarian plays, operas, novels, music, and paintings, there was also a call for more "modern" works, and Balázs was more than ready to respond to both. Coincidentally, his roommate at the Eötvös Collegium, an institute of advanced studies established to develop exceptional teachers, was Zoltán Kodály, who would become one of the greatest Hungarian composers of the twentieth century and write the music for some of Balázs's poems and operatic librettos. At this point in his life, Balázs experimented in all forms of writing, and in 1904, he and Kodály joined the Thalia Society, founded by Georg Lukács, who was to become one of the eminent communist philosophers and literary critics in Europe. Lukács, as well as Kodály, had a profound influence on Balázs, and their endeavors in the Thalia Society led to the production of modern plays by writers such as Gerhard Hauptmann, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Frank Wedekind, and

Maxim Gorky. Spurred by the society's modernist program, Balázs wrote unusual plays for the stage while studying German philosophy and the dramas of Friedrich Hebbel. By 1906, he formed another important friendship, with the experimental composer Béla Bartók, who would often travel into the countryside with Kodály and Balázs to collect folk songs and music from the peasants. Part of the "revolutionary" movement in the arts at that time involved a rediscovery of Hungarian folklore. The songs and tales that the three friends gathered played a strong role in Balázs's growing interest in fairy tales.

In the fall of 1906, Balázs won a stipend that would allow him to spend the next year studying in Berlin and Paris. In Berlin, he participated in Georg Simmel's private seminar and wrote one of his most important essays, "The Aesthetics of Death," which was to determine a crucial aspect of Balázs's pantheistic outlook on life. For Balázs, death did not signify an end of life. Rather, it gave life its meaning. Balázs's focus in this sprawling essay filled with original postulates is on the relationship of art to death, and how art is the manifestation of the metaphysical instinct and enables the artist to endow his or her work with transcendental and religious significance. According to Balázs, "consciousness of life is only possible through death. . . . The prerequisite for the consciousness of life is death. That is, death is the prerequisite of art. Death endows life with shape. Its end is like the contour of a drawing, the limit of the figure, which gives it shape."[6] The paradox of death is that it generates a sensitivity toward life that allows us to feel the entirety of life, our mortality, and our eternity. Prompted by death, artists create various forms and genres to embrace life and give it significance and delineate it from nonexistence. One of the forms is the fairy tale, and Balázs discusses its paradoxical quality in relation to death: "The fairy tale does not yearn, does not look outside itself. It does not go in one direction and does not want to get to the root of anything. It remains introspective and plays kaleidoscopically with what's there. The fairy tale does not have any limits, and consequently, it is also not without limits. It does

not want to understand anything, and consequently, there is nothing that it doesn't understand. Its wide sea also has its distant shore, and consequently, it is also not a lonely island. The fairy tale is without consciousness. The feeling of transcendence is a feeling of it-does-not-go-further-than-here, and this feeling is exactly what the fairy tale does not know. The folk does not claim the novel or novella; it only has anecdotes, fairy tales, and legends."[7]

It is fascinating to see how Balázs, even before he began writing his major fairy tales, had already signaled his great interest in this genre by 1907 and attributed its origins to the folk. Also interesting is how he links fairy tales to instincts and pantheism. Notably, he dedicated the essay to Simmel when it was published in Hungarian in 1908. One of the foremost sociologists and philosophers of that time, Simmel stressed that knowing the world demanded intuitive thinking. Simmel's ideas enabled the fanatical romantic anticapitalist Balázs to formulate his mystical urges in metaphysical and poetical terms, and these urges were tied to the main concerns of his life—marginalization, lack of identity, the experience of alienation, or alienation as the basic condition of human beings. Ferenc Féher has summarized precisely how important Simmel's philosophy was for Balázs: "It was from this school that he created his central poetical experience: *the alienatedness of human existence*. . . . However, I am not using the term 'experience of alienation' in a banal sense, as this category has been used ever since its fashionable philosophical clearance sale. The question does not simply concern how to describe each and every human misery and distortion of the late bourgeois society, of the *fin de siècle*, as a symptom of alienation. Balázs felt and sensed vaguely and with a great deal of yearning that there must be something humanly essential behind 'the gates of life,' something that the forces of life (also conceived vaguely) have ripped from us. For the artist there is only one categorical imperative: to contribute to the reconquering of the essential world that has been ripped from us."[8]

When Balázs returned to Budapest in the fall of 1907 after a brief visit to Paris, he continued to be inspired by Simmel and

other thinkers who wrote about the alienated condition of human beings and the lack of communication that fostered desolation and isolation. These ideas formed the substance of poems, stories, plays, and articles, many of which were initially not accepted for publication. It is not by chance, however, that Balázs's first success in fiction was a fairy tale, "Die Stille" (Silence), which appeared in *Nyugat* (Western), a new literary journal, which promoted modernist art and literature and became one of the most prominent periodicals in Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century.[9]

"Silence" is highly significant because it indicates in form and content how Balázs cultivated the fairy tale as genre to pursue his mystical notion of identity and to celebrate his oneness with the world in opposition to the forces of alienation. The plot of this tale is simple and recalls age-old folk motifs that lend the narrative a rustic, poetic quality. (It is worth mentioning that Hermann Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and other European writers such as Knut Hamsun were embracing both Asian and European fairy tales and folklore at this time to pry at the essence of life.)

In Balázs's story, a naive young man by the name of Peter watches his sick mother in a hut in the mountains as she is about to die. She asks him to fetch some firewood outside, where the fairy Silence has been waiting and watching him for some time. She is in love with him and represents his destiny, but Peter is frightened by Silence literally and figuratively. So, he runs inside, where he is given a magic ring by his dying mother, who explains how it will help him find his destiny: he must place the ring on the finger of the person whom he loves most and who is intended for him. If he chooses the wrong person, he or she will die, and the ring will return to his finger until he finds the right person. Grief-stricken, Peter immediately places the ring on his mother's finger, but she dies because she is the wrong person. All at once, Silence appears and tells him to place the ring on her finger. He refuses and flees. Soon, he joins a wandering musician named Paul, and they spend many happy months together until Paul decides to become an apprentice to the Father of the Grotto, who creates fantastic music in the mountains.

Peter puts the ring on Paul's finger to try to keep him and maintain their friendship. However, Paul dies, and the fairy Silence reappears demanding the ring. Once again, Peter flees but falls in love with a factory worker named Ilona. The two share an intense relationship that falls apart when Ilona rejoices in silence. Indeed, she dies, and Silence appears to claim the ring. Peter refuses to yield to the fairy and returns to the mountains, where he finally realizes that he must succumb to his fate and bestow the ring on Silence, who lives at the bottom of a lake on a snowy mountain. It is there that Peter loses and finds himself in mysterious depths.

All the fairy-tale motifs and themes that recur in Balázs's fairy tales, plays, poems, librettos, and stories can be found in this enigmatic story—the wandering protagonist seeking the essence of life, mysterious woods and mountains, haunting music, pure friendship, passionate love, solitude, alienation, magical objects, and pantheistic ecstasy in a liminal state. Balázs turned the fairy tale into an enigma and harked back to the great German romantic fairy tales of W. H. Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Like these German writers who imbued the *Kunstmärchen* (the literary fairy tale) with complex philosophical notions that distinguished it from the oral folk tale, Balázs believed that there was a primeval spirit in the fairy tale that had to be cultivated to enable him and his readers to transcend their existential dilemma. To recapture this spirit, Balázs gave the language and plot of the fairy tale an enigmatic and mysterious quality that he sought to elaborate in various forms and with diverse media throughout his life. In this regard, he had a paradoxical relationship to modernism: he sought to recuperate and retain the traditional forms of storytelling while radically changing the contents and plots. Balázs's fairy tales dismiss material happiness and traditional marriages in favor of ecstasy and transcendence. One cannot overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation in a relationship or marriage, but through forms of art that merge with the cosmos.

Following the publication of "Silence," Balázs was able to publish "The Aesthetics of Death" and some other short pieces in

different magazines and journals that promoted the work of young, experimental writers. At the same time, he concentrated on finishing his studies for employment purposes. (Balázs was poor and often borrowed money from his rich friends, especially from Lukács.) In September of 1908, he received his doctorate after defending his dissertation on the German dramatist Friedrich Hebbel. After serving a month in the Hungarian army, he began teaching at a high school in Budapest to support himself while writing plays for the theater. Though Lukács championed Balázs as one of the most formidable young playwrights in Hungary, Balázs's plays had only a limited success during this period.

From 1909 to 1911, his artistic production was prolific, and his friendship with Lukács, who at this time was more influenced by German idealism and formalism than communism, deepened. They appeared to be destined for one another as spiritual friends in a kind of elective affinity.[10] Meanwhile, Balázs, who had numerous affairs, began a relationship with Edith Hajós, a student of medicine at the University of Budapest. She was the daughter of a wealthy lawyer who had converted from Judaism to Catholicism. A brilliant but apparently unstable woman, Edith was to play a major role in Balázs's life. They married in 1913 after Balázs converted to Catholicism to please her and her family and gain their trust. However, marital fidelity was a phrase that never entered Balázs's vocabulary. He rarely controlled or wanted to control his libido, and while he was engaged to Edith, he had a brief relationship with Irma Seidler, a gifted painter who happened to be Lukács's partner. Lukács was interested in having an affair with Balázs's sister, Hilda. In the circles in which Balázs and Lukács moved, free love was part of the revolutionary movement, but there were always casualties. When Irma Seidler, who had always been troubled, committed suicide in 1911 for unknown reasons, Balázs hesitated for a long time to tell Lukács about his affair, causing a temporary breach in their friendship. In 1914, Balázs encountered another woman, Anna Schlamadinger, married to a wealthy judge. Within a year, she left her husband and formed a threesome with

Balázs and Edith, who had come to accept her as a second wife. Eventually, Edith separated from them, and Balázs married Anna, who remained with him until his death. And until his death, Balázs continued to have affairs and would find solace in the forgiving arms of Anna.

Balázs's many entanglements with women will never be wholly unraveled, but they are important to consider when interpreting his artistic works: love as rapture and ecstasy and the representation of women associated with orgiastic death are constant motifs. Never, however, are the relationships with women based on mutual understanding. A good example is his adaptation of Charles Perrault's fairy tale "Bluebeard." In 1909, when Balázs met Edith, he was working on a mystery play, which he eventually titled *Bluebeard's Castle*. He finished the play in 1911 and dedicated it to Bartók and Kodály. After publishing it in a theater magazine, he offered it to them as a libretto for an opera. Kodály did not find it suitable for his work, but Bartók took on the project and began composing the score in 1911. He made some revisions in 1912; however, owing to World War I and the avant-garde nature of the music and libretto, the opera was not performed until 1918. It was not particularly well-received because of the radically mystical libretto and the complex musical score.

Indeed, in Balázs's modernist reinterpretation of the serial killer Bluebeard, the protagonist is transformed into some kind of intrepid, mysterious lover, whose power over the women he has loved is eternal and unquestionable. The one-act opera begins in a dark hall in a castle. Bluebeard has just arrived with his new wife, Judith, with whom he has eloped. She perceives that there are seven locked doors in the hall and wants to open them to bring light into the gloomy interior. At first, Bluebeard refuses to allow her to do this, declaring that the rooms are his private spaces, and if she loves him, she will not explore them. However, Judith insists that it is exactly because she loves him that she needs to know these secret places. Bluebeard relents, and one by one the doors are unlocked. The first reveals a torture chamber, stained with

blood; the second, a room filled with weapons; the third, a treasure chamber of gold and jewels; the fourth, a beautiful garden; the fifth, a huge window that opens unto Bluebeard's splendid estate. Once the huge hall is fully lit, Bluebeard tries to convince Judith to stop. But she refuses and opens the sixth door, which reveals a glistening silver lake of tears. Bluebeard pleads with her not to ask any more questions and to trust his love for her. But Judith is curious and wants to know about his former wives and whether he has murdered them. She insists that the blood-stained rooms and the tears come from his wives and that their bodies lie behind the seventh door. At this point, Bluebeard hands her the seventh key, and when Judith unlocks the last chamber, three beautiful women dressed in marvelous gowns with glistening jewels emerge. Bluebeard throws himself at their feet and praises them. Then he proceeds to laud Judith as his fourth wife and adorn her with heavy jewels. She is horrified, but he continues, and once he is finished, she follows the other three wives back into the darkness of the seventh room lit by moonlight. When the door closes, Bluebeard stands alone and is enveloped by the darkness.

This mystery play is a very bizarre redemption of Bluebeard—that is, of men who sequester their wives as beautiful objects that decorate the internal chambers of their castle, perhaps symbolic of the heart and soul of men.[11] On an autobiographical level, the play can be read as Balázs's enduring vision and treatment of women who were not to ask questions about a man's innermost feelings, behavior, and beliefs just as long as he adored them. They were to succumb to his taciturn power. On a philosophical level, the play can be understood as an exploration of the fathomless soul. The solitary Bluebeard's secrets seem to be unlocked, and yet they are never fully revealed. Bluebeard will live on in solitude and mystery. Questions are all that remain: Are the doors to the chambers of his life and soul representative of experiences that have led to dismal solitude? Can we ever know the identity of a person? Should love ever be questioned? *Bluebeard's Castle* does not provide

clear answers to these questions, but it certainly reveals Balázs at his narcissistic best.

In comparing Lukács's view of aesthetics to Balázs's perspective, Ferenc Féher makes the following astute observation: "In the process of analyzing the differences, we shall see that Balázs's aesthetics is just as much a theory of art of Narcissus as is his theory of the drama a poetics of Narcissus. . . . The first difference arises seemingly from a methodological approach, namely, that Balázs writes an 'aesthetics of the artist,' while Lukács conceives a 'general' philosophy departing from aesthetics (or even remaining within it)."[12] Clearly, there is a strong element of narcissism in everything that Balázs did or wrote. Despite his socialist leanings, he was often more concerned in depicting the solitary, ascetic hero and art as the means through which one is to overcome alienation, not political revolution, as Lukács believed.

Balázs's play about Bluebeard was not the only drama or mystery that Balázs wrote to explore his male fantasies. For instance, in 1912, he also published another mystery play, *A tündér* (The Fairy), in which a fairy causes a young couple to abandon their idyllic love for each other by inspiring them to pursue adventure and higher ambitions. The 1914 fairy tale "A három huséges királyleány" (The Three Faithful Princesses) depicted yet another intrepid hero, a powerful king named Suryakanta, who believes that deeds speak more than words and who is referred to as a tiger, fierce and stern. When he goes into the jungle one day to do penance, he comes across a black snake that he kills because his soul is arrogant and hard. All at once, the elephant god Ganesha appears and punishes him by detaching him from his hard soul. As a result, Suryakanta is transformed and becomes soft and servile. His loyal servant Rasakosha barely recognizes him, and his beautiful wife Balanpandita rejects him. Suryakanta himself feels that he has lost his stature and identity as king. He returns to the jungle in search of his identity and a faithful woman who will anchor his soul. After wearing a mask of his former self, he believes he has found a soul mate in the princess Kamailila, but she fails him when

put to a test. He becomes bestial and then resumes his kingly shape cleansing himself in a lotus pond. Finally, he is drawn to the princess Anangaraga, Kamailila's sister, and asks her what would happen if he were to change. "Suryakanta cannot change," she responds. "Among men Suryakanta is what the diamond is to all the stones: glistening, pure and hard. The flower of his life is rooted in previous lives and cannot move itself or change."[13] Upon hearing these words, Suryakanta realizes that Anangaraga is his soul mate and makes her his wife. Together they go back to his palace, where the eternally loyal Rasakosha greets the returning king.

Though Balázs called Anna Schlamadinger his Anangaraga as a pet name, and though he demanded absolute loyalty from her and other women as well as his male friends, Balázs could never become the resolute sovereign that he imagined himself to be, or wanted to be. The years that followed the publication of this fairy tale showed Balázs constantly changing his perspective on life and pursuing idealistic goals that led to his attachment to and "glorification" of communism.

When World War I erupted in June of 1914, he rejoiced and immediately sought to enlist in the Hungarian army. As Zsuffa remarks, "Balázs believed in 'individual conscience and individual responsibility.' He considered it his moral duty to break out of his isolation, to offer his life for the community. His mysticism gave way to a 'mystical anarchism.'"[14] Unlike many of his friends who opposed the war, such as Lukács, Balázs felt that war was sacred and would constitute some kind of cleansing act. However, when he was finally sent to the front in Serbia as a common soldier, he experienced the barbaric nature of war and the suffering caused by it, and he no longer glamorized it. After serving three months in Yugoslavia, he became critically ill and was sent home. When he had fully recuperated in the spring of 1915, he resumed his former life in Budapest, writing, teaching, maintaining his relationship with Edith and Anna, and having affairs. One relationship with a young woman named Eszter Grad turned tragic when she died by suicide. Though Balázs did not blame himself for her death, he was

disturbed and began living alone. In the fall of 1915, to overcome his solitude, he began inviting friends to his apartment in Budapest on Sunday afternoons to discuss philosophy, the arts, and culture. Most of the members of the group called the *Sonntagskreis* (Sunday Circle),[15] including Lukács, Kodály, Bartók, Arnold Hauser, Friedrich Antal, Karl Mannheim, Wilhelm Szilasi, Charles de Tolnay, Anna Lesznai, René Spitz, and others, became leading intellectuals and writers of the twentieth century. At that time, they were not active in politics and were more interested in a cultural revolution than a political one. As part of their program, they founded the Free School of Humanistic Sciences, where Balázs occasionally held lectures. For the most part, however, he focused on his writing—mystery plays, the ballet *A fából faragott királyfi* (The Wooden Prince) for Bartók, a volume of poetry, as well as *Lélek a háborúban* (Soul in War), a journal about his experiences in World War I.

By 1917, Balázs had completely changed his views on war, which he now opposed, and drew closer to Lukács. In fact, their friendship, which Lukács referred to as a brotherhood in arms, had reached its highest point, especially with Lukács's publication of an entire book dedicated to Balázs in early 1918, *Béla Balázs and Those Who Do Not Want Him*.[16] A brilliant critic, Lukács wrote sincerely about the significance of Balázs's early works, in particular his mystery plays:

> Surely, few poets live today whose artistic forms are so deeply rooted in the forms of human experience and grow so naturally out of them as is the case with Béla Balázs. That is why his development has been so slow and difficult: he is a naive poet in the most serious sense of the word; he expresses his own experiences alone, and does not have either the gift or the inclination to hide with skillful tricks anything that has not grown to perfection in him, that is still only incomplete in him. But precisely because his tremendous artistic talents are *a priori* linked to the eternal forms, because he approaches them not as

> historical circumstances, which can only be seen from the distance of historical perspective, but returns to them as to natural forms of expression for the innermost contents of his own soul, his path to reaching perfect solutions was very difficult. His "naturalistic tendencies" resisted the similarly vital aspiration for concise form, and he was able to achieve ripeness as an artist only when he was able to resolve this conflict.[17]

Indeed, Balázs had come into his own as a writer. In early 1918, *Hét mese* (Seven Fairy Tales), a collection of stories, some of which had appeared in *Nyugat* and included *The Wooden Prince*, was published, as well as *Kalandok és figurák* (Adventures and Figures), his sketches and novellas. Active as ever, he signed a contract to write a libretto for the Medgyaszay Theater in Budapest and joined a league of intellectuals with Lukács called the Knights of Europe to protest against militarism and nationalism. His wife Edith, who had traveled to Russia and spent several months there learning Russian, fell in love with a doctor, returned to Budapest, and asked for a divorce, which Balázs readily granted because he was more in love with Anna. The two separated amicably and maintained a close relationship throughout their lives.

By the fall of 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was collapsing, and Balázs joined the growing radical movement to establish an independent Hungary. Despite the fact that a republic was established in November, there was still great discontent among the populace, and the newly formed Hungarian Communist Party led by Béla Kun began fomenting unrest and demanded greater democratic reforms. Lukács became a member of the Communist Party, and though he supported his friend and his cause, Balázs withdrew from political activism because of some ethical concerns about the party. However, in March of 1919, as conditions in Hungary deteriorated, and the communists assumed control of the government and declared the country to be the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Balázs became politically active once again thanks to Lukács, who was appointed deputy commissar of public education. In this

capacity, Lukács assigned Balázs a position on the Writers Directorate in charge of literary affairs in the new republic. Aside from developing theater policy, Balázs established a fairy-tale department and appointed his friend Anna Lesznai to be one of the officials who supervised puppet plays and storytelling for children in theaters and schools. Ever since his childhood, when he used to listen to tales told to him by his father and by the peasants in the countryside, Balázs felt strongly that folk and fairy tales provided the joy in life connected to the essential experiences of the common people. Though hard-line communists criticized him for promoting fairy tales, claiming they were too unrealistic and furthered feudal and capitalist thinking, Balázs responded that storytelling formed the roots of all poetry and enabled children to grasp the deep meaning of community. It was through folklore, Balázs always hoped, that he might overcome the alienation he had felt since childhood, and it was through communion with the folk, he believed idealistically, that a new society could be created.

During the four-month existence of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Balázs worked tirelessly to inject a utopian spirit into all the cultural projects he developed. While Lukács regarded communism from the viewpoint of a policy maker, who, at times, ruthlessly ordered the destruction of all enemies, Balázs remained an idealist who came to believe in communism as a religion and a means through which he might find his true community. However, there was too little time to establish a strong socialist, not to mention, communist society in Hungary, and the Hungarian Soviet Republic was soon attacked by Romanian and Czechoslovakian forces in April of 1919 with the support of England, France, and America. In response, both Balázs and Lukács went to the battle front to join the Hungarian Red Army and fight for their different communist beliefs. Before he left Budapest, Balázs married Anna Schlamadinger, fearing that he might never see her again.

But Balázs was a survivor. When the Hungarian forces were finally defeated and the leading members of the Hungarian Soviet Republic surrendered and were granted diplomatic immunity on

August 1, 1919, Balázs fled to Budapest and went into hiding. With the help of friends, he managed to escape the police, and disguised as his brother, he eventually made his way to Vienna by traveling via boat on the Danube with Anna by his side. Although he did not know this at that time, Balázs was to spend the next twenty-five years in exile as a political refugee in Austria, Germany, and the Soviet Union, often living under dire circumstances.

> Everything depends on our spiritualizing communism into a religion. That is our mission. There are so many today with hungry hearts; more than ever before.
>
> —BÉLA BALÁZS, LETTER TO ANNA LESZNAI (1921)[18]

There were numerous friends (and enemies) in the Hungarian exile community of Vienna. Many of the members of the Sunday Circle, including Mannheim, Karl Polányi, Lesznai, and Lukács, were there and lived in fear that they might be extradited. It was difficult for most of them to find employment, and since Balázs had been raised with German as his "mother" tongue, he now decided to write and publish mainly in German, intuiting that his Austrian exile might be of long duration. One of his plays, *Halálos fiatalság* (Deadly Youth), written in 1917, was translated and to be performed by the Neue Wiener Bühne in Vienna, and he spent a good deal of his time rewriting the German translation and directing the play. In the meantime, he and Anna had to move from boarding house to hotel to boarding house in search of an affordable dwelling. They finally rented a small house in Reichenau, outside of Vienna, thanks to the financial help of his former wife, Edith, who had left Russia and suddenly appeared in Vienna. Meanwhile, Balázs met the famous Danish writer Karin Michaelis, with whom he began writing a novel, *Túl a testen: Egy férfi és nö naplója* (Beyond the Body: Diary of a Man and a Woman, 1920), and he managed to make a meager living by writing plays, pantomimes, poems, essays, screenplays, and stories. Some of his works, such as the novel

Isten tenyerén (On God's Palm, 1921), were still being published in Hungary or in Hungarian exile magazines.

As his interests turned more and more toward writing screenplays and film criticism for German and Austrian newspapers, he received a strange offer. Genia Schwarzwald, a wealthy Austrian patron of the arts and founder of an exclusive private school for girls, had known Balázs before the Hungarian Revolution, and when he came to Vienna in 1919, she had provided financial assistance and also introduced him to Karin Michaelis. In September of 1921, she learned that her friend Mariette Lydis, a talented painter and illustrator, was looking for a writer who might create stories based on twenty aquarelles in Chinese figurative style that she had composed.[19] Schwarzwald contacted Balázs, who was then hired by Lydis after he submitted two tales that met with her approval. However, there was an urgent deadline, and Balázs was expected to write sixteen tales within two weeks. Intrigued by the challenge, Balázs, who had a great interest in Asian art, went to work immediately and punctually delivered the tales that were to form the book *Der Mantel der Träume: Chinesische Novellen* (*The Cloak of Dreams: Chinese Fairy Tales*, 1922), published in Vienna. Steeped in Taoist philosophy, these tales are among the best he ever wrote and reflected Balázs's profound personal concerns about friendship, alienation, poetry, transformation, and transcendence. Aside from a glowing review by Thomas Mann, this book received little attention, but Balázs thought so highly of it that he himself translated it into Hungarian in 1948 with a new title, *Csodálatosságok könyve* (The Book of Marvels), which represented his enduring belief in the metaphorical power of fairy tales to express his philosophical beliefs.

It is not by chance that in 1921, at a key point in his life, Balázs produced these fairy-tale gems in his mother tongue. Indeed, he never stopped creating fairy tales in either German or Hungarian, even though he moved more and more toward writing screenplays and writing about film as the highest form of art. But film, to his mind, had to be commensurate with the fairy tale. In his incisive

analysis of Balázs's life and poetics, Hanno Loewy comments: "Already in his earliest philosophical fragment about art, 'The Aesthetics of Death,' Balázs points to the fairy tale—beyond its significance as genre—also as a medium in which yearning and expression would blend into 'truth of form,' which is even more important than the 'truth of content.' Balázs's turn to film, for which he certainly never abandoned his interest in fairy tales, dramas, and prose, will be interpreted here as an endeavor to establish a popular medium within the context of the modern, technologized mass society commensurate with the fairy tale, a medium that would be capable of offsetting alienation in a ritual and controlled act of initiation into a state of unity between life and cultural form—at the cost, to be sure, of exchanging the true wish fulfillment for an act of visual union with the object of desire. His interpretation of film does not aim for the avant-garde, but rather for a new folk culture and a new narrative tradition. The vanishing point of Balázs's aesthetics of the cinema is the imaginary enchantment of the world into a visual ritual of storytelling."[20]

From 1921 to 1926, Balázs developed his notions of film as art form in his reviews for the Berlin communist paper, *Die rote Fahne,* and also for the liberal Viennese newspaper *Der Tag*, which provided him with his own column. He wrote well over two hundred articles for these publications, some of which became part of his first major book on film, *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* (The Visible Man or the Culture of Film, 1924). This work celebrated film as a new and revolutionary art form because it transcended print and breathed life into culture by giving humanity an actual face that could express the needs and wishes of people in a profound way. Balázs wrote not only about the cinema but also about the theater, cultural events, and art. This was also the period in which he began writing screenplays for Hans Otto Löwenstein, primarily to make money, but also as a kind of apprenticeship that would enable him to learn more about the production of films.[21] Aside from his work in the cinema, he was active in the newly founded Free School, which had been transplanted to Vienna

from Budapest; participated in various cultural movements for peace, such as Clarté, founded by Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland; and formed friendships with some of the leading German and Austrian writers living in Vienna, such as Robert Musil and Arthur Schnitzler. As a Communist Party sympathizer, he wrote short propaganda plays and prose pieces for the party's celebrations, donated money and time for communist causes, and continually placed himself at the service of the party's clandestine operations. In the meantime, he became the foremost cultural and film critic in Austria and was able to lead a more comfortable life with Anna, who worked as a secretary, in Vienna. A prolific writer, he never abandoned the fairy tale and published *Das richtige Himmelblau* (The True Skyblue), a collection of three fairy tales for young readers, in 1925. Interestingly, all three tales, "Brother Country," "The True Skyblue," and "The Brave Machine Boy, the Old Toad, and the Big Multiplication Table," are imbued with utopian notions of an alternative realm. The protagonists, all children, learn to cope with problems in the real world by experiencing otherness or entering into another condition. It is through otherness that unification is achieved or conflicts are resolved.

His conception of fairy tales as transformative media that could immerse the reader or listener in another human condition went hand in hand with his conception of screenplays and cinema as transformative art. Since the film industry in Austria, was in a crisis, however, Balázs realized that he had to seek opportunities elsewhere to pursue his career as critic and scenarist, namely, in Berlin. In June 1926, he held a lecture at the Klub der Kameraleute (Cameramen's Club) in which he praised the cameraman as the lyricist of the film. Aside from fomenting a quarrel with Sergei Eisenstein, the pioneer Russian filmmaker, who criticized him for his "bourgeois" glorification of the cameraman as artist, Balázs was able to impress producers and filmmakers and make contacts that would enable him to support himself as a screenplay writer and critic in Berlin. After he received a commission from Karl Freund of Fox

Europa Production to write the scenario for Berthold Viertel's *Die Abenteuer eines Zehnmarkscheins* (The Adventures of a Ten-Mark Note), he moved permanently to Berlin with Anna in the fall of 1926.

After an auspicious beginning and success with another film, Alexander Korda's *Madame wünscht keine Kinder* (Madam Wants No Children, 1926), Balázs had nothing but problems with the German film industry. He wrote the screenplay for *Doña Juana*, directed by the Hungarian filmmaker Paul Czinner, but was so unhappy with the final product that he demanded his name be withdrawn from the credits. In a second project with Czinner, an adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's play *Fräulein Elsie*, he had another argument and sued Czinner once more to have his name deleted from the credits. After these two incidents, Balázs was regarded as persona non grata in the film industry. However, in 1929, an independent filmmaker, Alfred Abel, hired him to write the scenario for *Narkose* (Anaesthesia), which was based on a novella by Stefan Zweig.Indeed, Balázs continued to find work as a scenarist outside the large studios.

As usual, he did more than write screenplays while he was in Berlin. Aside from giving lectures in Marxist clubs, writing hundreds of articles and reviews for different newspapers and important left-wing journals such as *Die Weltbühne*, serving on the executive board of the German Film Authors' Association, promoting the union work of the Main Organization of German Film Creators, and supporting communist causes, Balázs worked with the famous Marxist director Erwin Piscator, with whom he endeavored to produce an agit-prop play; wrote the libretto for a ballet, *Mammon,* with music by Ernst Krenek; and composed another libretto, for Wilhelm Grosz's opera *Achtung, Aufnahme!* (Camera! Action!), produced in 1930.

One of his more interesting collaborations was with Lisa Tetzner, a notable storyteller and writer of children's books, who published a remarkable fairy-tale novel, *Hans Urian geht nach Brot* (Hans Urian Goes in Search of Bread, 1929). This book, based on a poem by Matthias Claudius and a French novel, *Jean sans pain*

(*Johnny Breadless*, 1921), by Paul Vaillant-Couturier, recounts the fabulous adventures of a poor young boy named Hans, who sets out to buy some bread for his starving mother. However, he encounters some difficulties and does not grasp why it is so difficult to buy bread. At one point, he meets a fairy-tale rabbit who can talk and fly and is willing to take him on a trip to explain how capitalism is based on exploitation and why people are suffering from hunger. They fly around the world, to Greenland, America, Africa, India, China, Russia, and Europe, and the rabbit shows him how and why people everywhere are being exploited (except in Russia, of course). After completing the trip, Hans returns with some bread for his mother and a great deal of knowledge of how capitalism functions. Balázs adapted the novel for the theater as a musical comedy with lyrics written by Eric Kästner and jazz music by Wilhelm Grosz. His rendition tended to sharpen the politically didactic message of the novel and provide a livelier dramatic plot.

Balázs's work on this fairy-tale play revealed to what extent he had become politicized by 1929 and how much he wanted to demonstrate his dedication to communism. His fairy tales had generally been much more philosophical and mystical than the play, and though they explored the need to overcome alienation, solitude, and oppression, they usually ended on a tragic or nostalgic note. They were not as hopeful as *Hans Urian*, which, of course, could be distinguished from his other fairy tales that were written for adults. Balázs was, however, to return to sophisticated symbolism and intriguing mysticism soon after his work on this children's play. But in the spring of 1930, he suffered a heart attack on an outing in the countryside with Anna and had to be hospitalized for three months. While still in the hospital, he finished correcting the proofs for his second major book on film, *Geist des Films* (The Spirit of the Film), and in August, soon after he was released from the hospital, he became involved in another debacle that involved his screenwriting.

After an argument between the eminent director Georg Pabst, the radical dramatist Bertolt Brecht, and the gifted musician Kurt

Weill about the appropriate adaptation of Brecht's successful play *The Three-Penny Opera* (1929) that threatened to undermine the project, Balázs was called upon to settle the dispute by writing a new screenplay. Brecht, who had retained the rights to approve the scenario, did not think highly of Balázs, and even though Balázs produced a screenplay that incorporated some of Brecht's and Pabst's ideas that served as the basis for the film, Brecht was dissatisfied and began suing Pabst and the Nero Film Company. In the meantime, Balázs, in need of rest after his heart attack, was fortunate to receive an offer to write a screenplay called *The Lioness*, which was to be filmed in Algeria, where he could work and relax. Unfortunately, this film never saw the light of day owing to its anticolonialist tendencies. The French government confiscated it, and the film was never found. But Balázs managed to convalesce in Algeria.

In the spring of 1931, he was once again in Berlin and received a tempting offer to work on a film that he could not possibly refuse. The offer was made either by the glamorous actress Leni Riefenstahl, who had not yet become notorious for her Nazi leanings, or perhaps through her producer Harry Sokal, to write the scenario for a mountain film, *Das blaue Licht* (The Blue Light), based on a Swiss novel. Riefenstahl, who by this time was twenty-eight and a star, wanted to direct the film and play the major role. Mountain films and novels had become very popular in Germany, even though they had been criticized by left-wing critics such as Siegfried Kracauer as representing the spirit of Nazism and idealizing nature and peasant life.[22] Balázs, who spent part of his childhood in the mountains of Hungary, loved to hike, still clung to pantheism, and felt a special attachment to peasant life, disagreed with Marxist critics and defended the mountain films. Moreover, the opportunity to work with Riefenstahl and the great cameraman Hans Schneeberger was very appealing.

The plot of *The Blue Light*, which resembles both a legend and a fairy tale, is very simple. A young German painter by the name of Vigo appears in a small village in the Italian Dolomites to spend

his summer vacation. He soon learns that there is a mysterious blue light that radiates from Monte Cristallo only at full moon and causes the superstitious villagers to close the shutters of their homes. He is then told that the magic power of the blue light attracts young men of the village and lures them to scale the summit of Monte Cristallo to find the source of the glowing light. Inevitably, they fall to their death, and strange statues in the village are erected in their memory. When Junta, a beautiful young peasant woman always dressed in rags, appears in the village to sell some berries, the villagers begin to throw stones at her and chase her from the village. Only Vigo comes to her aid while she safely disappears into the mountains where she lives as an outcast.

Later, Vigo learns that she is the only one who knows the source of the blue light and thus is blamed for the death of the young men and regarded as the devil's witch. Enchanted by her beauty, Vigo decides to wander into the mountains the next day and encounters Junta. They fall in love, and he dreams of spending the rest of his days in the mountains with her. After a few weeks pass, he follows her one night to the source of the blue light on top of Monte Cristallo and discovers a cave filled with glistening blue crystals. She does not realize that he has followed her, and the next day he descends into the village to tell the people about the crystals, for he believes that the crystals could make them and Junta rich and improve their living conditions. The villagers follow him to the cave and strip it of its beautiful crystals. That night, they celebrate in a drunken revelry and keep Vigo with them. The next day, he wants to return to his beloved Junta, but to his dismay, he finds her dead. She had discovered that the cave, which had been her temple, had been destroyed by the very people who had despised her. In despair, feeling that she had been violated, she had probably fallen to her death or died by suicide. Vigo is left alone and desolate.

Whether Balázs was responsible for the entire scenario of the film, or whether it was wholly Riefenstahl's work, as she later claimed, is a matter of debate. However, Balázs clearly spent a great deal of time developing the screenplay and even went to the

Dolomites to help Riefenstahl direct. Several critics have interpreted the film as a protofascist celebration of the purity of nature and the violation of the innocent German woman, anticipating Riefenstahl's attraction to Hitler and Nazi mythology. On the other hand, Loewy and Zsuffa argue that Riefenstahl had been influenced by Balázs's leftist views, and one could interpret the film as anticapitalist and antireligious. It is certainly filled with pantheistic mysticism.

There is hardly any dialogue in this film, and the close-ups of the leading characters and the different groups of villagers and their expressions speak volumes. The villagers are largely depicted as bitter, close-minded, disturbed, irrational, and violent. The priests and the elderly women are particularly mean and distasteful. Junta is desperate, fearful, innocent, good-natured, and isolated. She represents the misunderstood outsider, the eternal marginalized and alienated individual who lives in solitude. Vigo, the creative artist, is the only person who has empathy for her. He intuitively senses her innocence, which is associated with the majesty of pure nature, and how she is innately part and parcel of nature. She stands outside the norms and laws of society and does not need them. She is part of the blue light that recalls the German romantic poet Novalis's "Blue Flower," the symbol of eternal yearning and utopia. Vigo and Junta do not, however, speak the same language, either literally or figuratively. She speaks an Italian dialect, and he speaks high German. Lacking verbal communication, they cannot articulate fully what each wants. Vigo, thinking that he will do Junta some good by leading the villagers to the cavern of crystals so that she might not be treated as a demonic outsider, does not appreciate her soulful dedication to the blue crystals. Her dreams and values are destroyed by miscommunication and greed. Certainly, if one interprets the film as a depiction of materialist greed, ignorance, and the destruction of ideals, one can see Balázs's imprint all over it—in the photographic close-ups of the expressions on people's faces and the mystical and majestic mountain as well as in the yearning and solitude of

the distressed artist, who senses that he has brought about the death of his own dream.

As *The Blue Light* went into production, Balázs, who had joined the German Communist Party in the spring of 1931, was invited to Moscow to write a screenplay about the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic based on the novel *Tisza Gari* (The Tisza Burns), written by Béla Illés with an introduction by Béla Kun. Although internal disputes with the members of the Hungarian Communist Party caused this project to be delayed and eventually to fail, Balázs decided that he would have better opportunities if he remained in the Soviet Union to write and develop the projects that interested him, especially since the Nazis were gaining more power and he had cut most of his ties with the major studios of the German film industry.

In Moscow, he and Anna began learning Russian while Balázs worked for different journals and tried to make contacts with important people in the Soviet film industry. The first three years in Moscow were extremely difficult. Though Balázs received an offer to teach film at the New School for Social Research in New York, which might have afforded him a more secure living, he rejected it out of dedication to the communist cause. Fortunately, his practical expertise in film enabled him to establish and support himself as a director and scenarist from 1932 to 1937. He advised film companies on how to adapt literary works for the cinema, and Ukrainfilm in Odessa placed him in charge of a propaganda film, *Hold Out, Charlie!*, intended for children, that he had proposed.

It had been clear to Balázs by 1933 that he could not return to Berlin after Hitler's seizure of power, nor could he return to Hungary. But even his security in Moscow was uncertain in 1935 because of the intrigues among the Hungarian and German communists and the tight control of the paranoid Stalinist government. The publication of a Russian translation of *The Spirit of the Film* caused consternation among Russian critics because it did not follow party cultural policy. Nevertheless, Balázs was able to defend his position and to continue to work on *Hold Out, Charlie!*

while signing a contract to write a book about the theory of film and, in 1936, a contract to write a play about Mozart for the Central Children's Theater in Moscow. The enterprising Balázs, often helped by his former wife Edith in Russia and in Europe, never lacked for projects, many of which were rejected or never completed, yet he lived in fear that he might be arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

In 1937, the Moscow show trials began, and most of the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party, including Béla Kun, was executed. Numerous dedicated communists who had fled from Germany, Austria, and France were tried on false pretenses and murdered or sent to concentration camps. Balázs's younger brother, Ervin Bauer, who had become a renowned professor of biology at the University of Leningrad, was arrested that same year and sent to a gulag where he eventually died. Balázs ignominiously denied having any contact with him prior to the arrest and declared his allegiance to the Soviet government by writing letters to the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and the German section of the Comintern. To avoid the intrigues and possible persecution in Moscow, Balázs and Anna moved outside the city to the town of Istra, where they bought a cottage. Balázs hoped to live in solitude and focus mainly on his writing projects.

In 1938, he joined Lukács as one of the contributing editors of *Új Hang* (New Voice), a literary journal founded by Hungarian immigrants, and he continued to write for German publications while producing stories for children. However, since he did not toe the party line and had great difficulty in writing socialist realist fiction, he could never avoid conflict. During 1939, the year of the Hitler-Stalin pact, Balázs had a falling out with Lukács in the pages of the journal *Internationale Literatur*. Their estrangement from one another had been growing since their emigration to the Soviet Union in 1932, and their friendship ended with a dispute about aesthetics and politics in which Balázs condemned the orthodox Marxist critiques made by Lukács, who had castigated Balázs for his expressionist and aesthetic approach to literature. In the

meantime, Balázs began contemplating a new project that appeared to summarize his situation at the end of 1940. In a letter to the Committee on Art Affairs, he stated that he wanted to write about the eternal wandering Jew. As Zsuffa explains, Balázs stated that his eternal Jew would have

> "nothing in common with the original legend of the eternal Jew," who was condemned to keep wandering forever because he had driven Christ away from his doorstep. In Balázs's projected drama "the eternal Jew with the fall of Jerusalem, with the Diaspora, has lost his nation, his people. Since then, uprooted, he wanders restlessly throughout the world and seeks incarnation in folk and nation. As the bloodless shadows of the underworld thirst for blood, so does he thirst for materialization in the national life of a people, reaching down to the deep unconsciousness." Balázs's drama would take place not in the ancient but in modern times. In the problems and conflicts of this eternal Jew, all the ideological questions that influence present history and mobilize philosophies and tales would be reflections: "Nationalism or internationalism? Conservative tradition or revolutionary upheaval? Determination through the past or determination through the goal of the future? . . . Taking root in the national soil or world horizon?" Balázs's hero would find the solutions to these dilemmas in the classless society of Communism, where he would experience no contradiction between national and international feelings. There the wandering Jew could settle down and die at last in peace.[23]

Balázs, who clearly identified with the protagonist of his proposed play, was never able to develop this drama, nor did his own life lead to a happy end in a classless society. In December of 1941, he and Anna were forced to evacuate their cottage outside of Moscow because the German troops were threatening the devastation of the city. They were sent to Alma-Ata, capital of the Kazakh Soviet Republic in Central Asia, where they were to spend the next two years. During this time, he and Anna contracted typhus, and

Anna almost died. Balázs continued to work on two different screenplays and also took an interest in Kazakh folklore. He wrote an essay about the folk tales and translated some narratives and poetry into German; they were published posthumously in *Das goldene Zelt: Kasachische Volksepen und Märchen* (The Golden Tent: Kazakhian Folk Epics and Fairy Tales) in 1956.

At the end of 1944, Balázs returned to Moscow, where he continued to make proposals for films dealing with the Nazis and World War II. When the war ended in the spring of 1945, his work and welcome in Moscow came to an end. Balázs was ceremoniously returned to Budapest by the Russian military in a plane after twenty-six years of exile. Now famous as a film theorist and screenplay writer, he hoped that he would become the director of a film institute or receive a professorship at the university. However, in part owing to the animosity of Lukács, who played a major role in the cultural politics of postwar Hungary, Balázs was offered only a minor position as a lecturer at the newly founded film institute. Many other Hungarian communists suspected Balázs of betraying those Hungarian communists executed in Moscow and kept their distance from him. Despite the lack of recognition and support, Balázs was as active, idealistic, and ambitious as ever. His reputation grew in Europe through the publication of his autobiography, *Jugend eines Träumers* (The Youth of a Dreamer, 1946), and translations of *The Spirit of the Film* into different European languages. He resumed publishing in Hungarian with a volume of poetry, *Az én utam* (My Road, 1945); translated *The Cloak of Dreams* (1948); and wrote the play *Cinka Panna Balladája* (The Ballad of Panna Cinka, 1948) with music by Kodály. This drama featured a wild female gypsy violinist, who leads a rebel army in the eighteenth century against the Hapsburgs; it bordered on fantastical mysticism that was not well received in postwar Hungary. Needless to say, the play was a flop, and Balázs was viciously attacked in the press and by party officials. Marginalized in Budapest, Balázs was a celebrated figure outside of Hungary. He was continually invited to lecture on film in Italy, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany and to attend film festivals. Toward the end of his life, he

was negotiating with DEFA in East Berlin to become a major film consultant, which would have allowed him to spend more time in Germany, where he was more appreciated than in Hungary. However, he became ill in Budapest on May 20, 1949, and died from a brain hemorrhage.

> Balázs regarded himself as a man who lives on a borderline, as a wanderer, as a questioner. His approach to theory remained dialogical, and essayistic—naive in an elementary sense. He clung tightly to the romantic notion of pan-symbolism through all the twists and turns of his way that transformed humans and things into forms of relationships in which transcendence and immanence are not separated from one another and vice versa.
>
> —HANNO LOEWY, *BÉLA BALÁZS—MÄRCHEN, RITUAL UND FILM*[24]

Although it may appear as though Balázs wrote the sixteen "Chinese" tales in *The Cloak of Dreams* in 1921 on a whim in response to a challenge and without preparation, nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, this book, his first major publication in German, represents the culmination of his interest in Asian art and the high point in his development as a writer of fairy tales. As Thomas Mann suggested in his review of the book, Balázs captured something of the Taoist Chinese spirit in these stories.[25]

It is difficult to establish exactly when Balázs began taking an interest in Asian art and culture because he read so voraciously and widely as a young man, but he was certainly acquainted with Chinese literature and art when he joined the Theosophical Society in 1914. It was about this time that he wrote an article, "On the Philosophy of East Asian Art," in which he remarked:

> Chinese tales are full of the motif that statues converse and drink wine with humans. People suddenly find themselves in a picture, live in it for a few years with a painted woman and then

> come out of it, but since this visit, the girl has put a kerchief over her hair, for she has become a woman!
>
> Pygmalion prayed to the gods to bring his sculpture to life. The Chinese artists pray lest their works grow alive, for they do not depict nature in dead pictures, but create new creatures already alive, increasing this way the number of the creatures of nature . . . for Chinese art is not symbolic. A picture or statue means only itself and nothing else.[26]

In fact, Balázs had already begun experimenting with his notions of Chinese literature, especially Taoist tales, some time between 1908 and 1914, when he began publishing stories in *Nyugat*. One of his fairy tales, "Das Buch des Wan Hu-Tschen" ("The Book of Wan Hu-Chen"), is a good example. It was more than likely written about this time and was published in Hungarian in *Hét mese* (Seven Fairy Tales) in 1918 and in German in 1921, several months before he received the commission to write his Chinese tales for Mariette Lydis. This tale is highly significant because it not only anticipates many of the themes in *The Cloak of Dreams*, but also indicates just how integral Taoism had become to Balázs's personal philosophy.

"The Book of Wan Hu-Chen" recounts the strange life of Wan Hu-Chen, who wastes the inheritance left to him by his parents and offends his wealthy relatives by reading books and studying for the state examination so that he can become a civil servant. He has no desire to do an honest day's work as a sailor, weaver, or merchant. However, Wan Hu-Chen is dumb. He fails the exams and gradually becomes so poor that his relatives mock him and cut him off from the family. In the meantime, Wan Hu-Chen falls in love with Li-Fan, the beautiful daughter of the governor of the region. But she has nothing but disdain for him. So, poor Wan Hu-Chen wanders about during the day, scorned by society, and out of despair he begins writing a book about his unrequited love. At one point, he summons his fictional Li-Fan from the valley of the white apple blossoms to complain about her neglect of him.

Gradually, after a major conflict, his imaginative world blends with his real world. As he turns older and has a child with the imagined Li-Fan, he decides to travel to the realm of the white apple blossoms and disappears from the earth. That is, he transcends earth through the ecstasy of love.

In many respects, this tale could be considered very similar to a classical Taoist story. The themes of transformation, spiritual awakening, reincarnation, and regeneration are in keeping with Taoist philosophy. In addition, Balázs explores a variation on some of his usual themes in this unusual fairy tale: the marginalized writer, suffering in solitude, unrequited love, and commitment to the imagination and art as the means to personal fulfillment. Tao means the path or the way along which all things move, and unlike western thinking, Taoism regards all matter as possessing spirit, and knowing as a form of noetic intuition. To learn how to go with the flow in life and become as one with all things is one of the key principles of Taoism.

Simple as this may seem, it is not easy to discard rational thinking and illusion and to attain oneness with nature. As Raymond Van Over explains, "To understand the Tao one must first realize that the heavenly Tao simply pursues its course and does not speak about it or synthesize its essence: So, says the Taoist, let human action be like water that quietly seeks out all the crevices of life, but it does it silently and effortlessly. If resistance is met, it is best to rest passively until it is exhausted and then go on one's way. In other words, he who is completely identified with the course of nature flows effortlessly with it, never fighting or resisting such infinite power but utilizing its strength for one's own fulfillment. . . . In psychological terms this implies the destruction of arrogance, egotism, and desire—of the restless spirit that seeks to conquer and serve its own ends. To accomplish effortlessly is the virtue of natural man—the man who has Tao."[27]

Certainly, Balázs did not have Tao and never became a Taoist, but his inclination toward Taoism was evident in his early leanings toward pantheism, mysticism, and romanticism and in his

writings. In "The Aesthetics of Death," the essay he wrote for Simmel's seminar in 1907, there is strong indication of how close his thinking was to Taoism. "Art," he wrote, "is the perception of the transcendence of life. In other words, art is the consciousness of life. . . . The consciousness of life depends on death, in other words, art depends on death."[28]

The paradox of death giving birth to life through artistic form is central to understanding why the fairy tale became so important to Balázs and remained essential for him throughout his life. Loewy remarks that "at the high point of his 'Aesthetics of Death' Balázs turned quickly away from the tragedy and to the fairy tale, and this deserves special attention. For him, the fairy tale embodies a special paradox and at the same time the greatest opposite imaginable to the 'religious art' of the tragedy. Where the connection with death or the tragic contradiction leads to the highest consciousness, the fairy tale, as art of the folk, leads away into a flat world of unconsciousness, into a world in which nothing is impossible."[29]

Many currents of thought intersect in Balázs's conception of the fairy tale, and they include the theoretical influences of Simmel and Lukács. In the end, however, his notion of the fairy tale as art of the folk in which nothing is impossible remained peculiarly his own, for his own personal philosophy was embedded in it, as were his experiences. When Balázs began writing the fairy tales of *The Cloak of Dreams*, he was thirty-eight years old. He had lost his father as a boy; moved from a provincial city to Budapest as a poor but talented student; participated in the Hungarian cultural renaissance at the beginning of the twentieth century by writing poems, stories, libretti, essays, reviews, and plays; formed a mutually beneficial friendship with Lukács; traveled in Austria, Germany, and France; married a wealthy and gifted Hungarian woman; converted to Catholicism out of convenience; fought as a common soldier in World War I; divorced and married another woman, who had left her husband for him; participated in the Hungarian communist revolution; fought in the Red Army; escaped to Vienna with his second wife; barely made a living; and begun writing

in his mother tongue, German, knowing that his life would depend on his ability to communicate in a language that was in some ways foreign to him.

Throughout his life, Balázs yearned to return to the folk and become one with them in an idealized classless society in which he would be accepted. Did he want to return to the Hungarian folk from whom he felt excluded? Or did he want to gain a sense of his Jewish roots, which had never been appropriately planted? It is unclear, but the medium he employed to express his desolate and marginalized feelings and his yearning for communion and community is the fairy tale, whether in the form of prose narrative, drama, libretto, children's story, film, or poem.

There is some evidence that Balázs may have read a collection of Chinese novellas and stories in preparation for writing the collection of tales for Mariette Lydis's paintings. Lee Congdon states: "In order to produce the book by Christmas, the publisher asked to have the stories in hand within three weeks. After some financial haggling, Balázs accepted the assignment and, having perused a volume of Chinese fables to get a feel for the 'jargon,' set to work."[30] Congdon does not cite his source, but Balázs might have read Leo Greiner's *Chinesische Abende: Novellen und Geschichten* (*Chinese Evenings: Novellas and Stories*, 1913), Paul Kühnel's *Chinesische Novellen* (*Chinese Novellas*, 1914), or Hans Rudelsberger's *Chinesische Novellen (Chinese Novellas*, 1914). All three works underwent several printings and would have been available to Balázs, and all three would have provided models that might have inspired him. They contain traditional stories from the oral and literary traditions of China that date back to the first century and reveal a great deal about Chinese customs and thinking. All three authors translated the tales and employed a restrained and succinct style in German that contrasted with the unusual contents: extraordinary incidents in worlds in which everything was constantly alive and being transformed and reincarnated.

The tales in *The Cloak of Dreams* are stunning because Balázs managed to interpret the paintings of Mariette Lydis in keeping

with various strands of Taoist and Confucian philosophy while drawing associations from his own personal experiences. Like Hermann Hesse, who was writing fairy tales influenced by Asian thinking at the same time, Balázs drew inspiration and hope from tales of transformation, even when many end sadly, tragically, and nostalgically. It is interesting to note that the two tales that "encase" the collection, so to speak—"The Cloak of Dreams" and "The Victor"—concern alienation and suicide. There is something very sad about the empress Naï-Fe, who can only keep her vows of love to her husband by gazing at the images of her dreams that she herself has stitched into his cloak. There is something very sad when the general Du-Dsi-Tsun in "The Victor" maims opponents in his quest to find the love of a woman and tenderness and then kills himself out of shame. Balázs thrives on paradoxes, mystery, and mysticism. His terse, simple prose veils the complexity of his metaphysical thought and the connections to his own life.

Many of his tales are reflections of friendship and the hardship one must endure to maintain a true relationship and understand its profound significance. Balázs suffered a great deal in his friendship with Lukács and with other men such as Bartók and Kodály, and there are obvious references to his sentiments about these friendships, or lack of understanding, in his depictions of friends in "The Opium Smokers," "The Clumsy God," and "The Friends." In the latter tale, Balázs portrayed an ideal relationship, perhaps one that he envisioned with Lukács and could never realize in his personal dealings with the impervious philosopher. The marginalized friends become gods celebrated for their devotion to one another and to the principles of friendship that they exemplify. It is through their actions and behavior that the meaning of friendship is expressed, not through words. Balázs sought to make his tales become alive, part of life, at one with the images and his readers.

To read Balázs's fairy tales is to experience the bitterness and joys of life and to reach a condition of suspension or liminality in which nothing can be explained rationally but everything can be understood intuitively. In tales such as "The Parasols," "The Flea,"

"The Old Child," "Li-Tai-Pe and Springtime," "The Moon Fish," and "Tearful Gaze," the characters are transformed and find their paths to self-fulfillment by following their intuition or by being inspired by their imaginations. Nothing is impossible in these fairy tales because the protagonists learn to overcome the duality between the real and spiritual worlds. In "Li-Tai-Pe," the poet learns that "knowing is happiness and happiness is knowing" by recognizing that he must penetrate the superficial side of beautiful nature and by grasping its spiritual and physical wholeness.

Evil in Balázs's fairy tales is manifested through greed and lust for power that result in warrantless killing. In "The Robbers of Divine Power," the images of the band of brutal warriors and the devastation that they cause evoke the barbarism of World War I. The marauders do not disappear from earth but continue to exist, as Balázs suggests, and can erupt at any time. In "The Revenge of the Chestnut Tree," another robber is haunted by nature because of his unnatural or perverse use of his power. Nature takes its revenge through its mysterious transformative power, and he dies in the same way that he has brutally lived and ravaged other people.

Perhaps the most curious, autobiographical, and chilling of Balázs's tales is "The Ancestors." A customs officer, content with his life, is driven to his death by the demands of three dead skulls—his father, grandfather, and great grandfather—who want him to fulfill their destinies. In the gruesome ending—they devour him after he dies—Balázs reckons with tradition and the past. As a young writer at the beginning of the twentieth century, he belonged to the cultural movement of young intellectuals who resisted the past or wanted to rejuvenate the past in their own terms, invigorating Hungarian culture. Though he was a published author and well-known in Budapest cultural circles, Balázs's neoromantic and mystical writings were also heavily attacked by the old guard and traditionalists. Chased out of Budapest by the White Army after the revolution, Balázs was exhausted and desperate in 1919. His past had caught up to him, but unlike the pathetic customs officer in his story, Balázs did not allow himself to be torn

apart. By this time, he had faith in a different past that was to be his future, namely, his devotion to communism.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, Balázs was never able to reconcile his art with communism. *The Cloak of Dreams*, though filled with class antagonism and critiques of materialism, are not per se "socialist" fairy tales, which he was to write after he settled in Vienna and Berlin. His Chinese tales are more a blend of romantic anticapitalist and Taoist notions about optional paths and alternative ways of life. It is easy to see, despite their provocative and disturbing endings, how these fairy tales may have brought Balázs some joy and comfort. It was through transforming the fairy tale that he could depict the possibilities of life under impossible conditions. Balázs's radical contribution to the modern fairy tale was to demonstrate what the great German romantic Novalis had written more than a hundred years ago: only through art can we learn to become true human beings.

6

Christian Bärmann

THE DELIGHTFUL ARTIST NOBODY KNOWS

The Giant Ohl takes charge. (Illustration by Christian Bärmann.)

VIRTUALLY NO ONE in Germany or the rest of the world knows anything about the brilliant painter and storyteller Christian Bärmann (1881–1924), who died at the young age of forty-three. A short synopsis of his life reads like a fairy tale with an open

ending.[1] But it is a somewhat sad fairy tale as well, for he died in the prime of his life, and most of his paintings and drawings were destroyed in a fire at the Glaspalast in Munich on June 6, 1931. During a British bombardment in 1945, more of his works were eradicated at the Martin von Wagner Museum, part of the University of Würzburg.

Born in Würzburg to a poor baker's family, Bärmann was trained at a young age to become a tailor because he was never successful at school. However, he rebelled against his family in 1896 and went to Hamburg, where he began working on ships, and traveled to South America a few times. In 1898, he returned to Würzburg, where his mother, now a widow, encouraged him to become an architect. With his mother's help, he mustered enough money to attend a school for architecture and art in Munich. Once there, however, he was rejected by the Academy of Art and was compelled to turn to a private school directed by a prominent Slovenian painter, Anton Ažbe (1862–1905), who recognized Bärmann's great talent for painting and illustration. A generous but strict brilliant teacher of fundamentals, Ažbe allowed Bärmann to study at his school without paying tutition. It was there, among many modernist painters such as Wassily Kandinsky, Ivan Bilibin, Leonard Frank, Igor Grabar, and other notable artists, that Bärmann was encouraged to give free rein to his imagination while learning from Ažbe's method using the Main Line and the Ball Principle. Thanks to Ažbe's rigorous training in human anatomy, Bärmann gradually became a master of figure drawings while exploring aquarelle and oil painting.

During the twentieth century, Bärmann also served as an apprentice for various painters in Munich and became known not only for his use of unusual colors but also for realistic paintings of Würzburg. In addition, Bärmann demonstrated a gift for sketching and drawing animals of different kinds, especially strange, fantastic creatures. He began publishing his graphic work in two of the major magazines of that time, *Simplicissmus* and *Die Jugend*. By 1905, he had won many awards for his drawings and sketches,

including the Rome Prize, which enabled him to travel to Italy to study the great Italian painters and improve his techniques and understanding of classical art. After spending about four years in Italy, he returned to Munich in 1910, where he spent a good deal of his time studying animals and nature. He had a special fondness for illustrating frogs, rabbits, birds, and insects. This was one of the reasons the prominent writer Waldemar Bönsels asked him to contribute sixty illustrations to his famous children's book, *Die Biene Maja* (*Maja the Bee*, 1912).

Although Bärmann enjoyed success and was recognized as an avant-garde painter, he was greatly disturbed by World War I, and his paintings such as *The Revolution* (1914) and *Der Brand* (*The Fire*, 1914) reflect his concern about the violence in Europe. This may be one of the reasons he turned for hope to fairy tales, often sketching scenes and creatures that would later appear in his books for children: *Die Kröte Rockröck* (*The Toad Röckkröck*, 1918), *Die Honriche* (The Honey Angels, 1923), *Der Riese Ohl und das Hannesle* (*The Giant Ohl and Tiny Tim,* 1925). This focus on children as portents of hope can also be seen in the twenty illustrations he did for Walter Terven's *Das Weihnachtsbuch* (The Christmas Book, 1918), in which children as angels decorate a tree in peace. Yet at the same time—and this was typical of his artwork and philosophy—there was danger lurking that might destroy innocent creatures.

In search of peace after World War I, he moved to a small village called Burghausen an der Salzach in Upper Bavaria, where he worked on writing and illustrating fairy tales until his early death in 1924. It was in the countryside that Bärmann produced his most significant stories. Clearly, his intention was to articulate his vision of a more peaceful world than the one he experienced during World War I. *The Honey Angels*, drawn in black and white, was published in 1923 and begins this way:

> There once lived a swarm of cocky honey angels in a tall tree. They were called the honey angels because they nourished themselves only from honey. Every morning they flew with their

> little jugs from flower to flower and gathered drops of honey. When their jugs were full, they carried them home and had nothing more to do the entire day other than to have fun and to do stupid things.
>
> Now, it so happened that there was a kind, fat toad, who lived in a cave in the coltsfoot woods. He was very ugly and looked horrible. But he never harmed anyone, for whoever is ugly is not always wicked. However, the honey angels, who saw the awkward toad every day, played all sorts of pranks on him and sometimes did nasty things. Indeed, they never left the toad in peace. Wherever the toad went, the honey angels delighted in playing tricks on him and taunting him.

Despite his enormous size and strength, he does not attack or hurt them. He shows patience and restraint until they no longer leave him any choice. Consequently, he creates a kind of glue or paste with the help of birds and covers a small tree outside his cave with it because the honey angels always wait in the morning on this tree to play their tricks on him. After preparing the tree in the evening, the toad goes to sleep. The next morning, he awakes and goes outside to see numerous honey angels stuck in the tree and whining. After spanking a whole swarm of them and then setting them free, he reminds them that people who do not take the lives of others seriously will pay for their bad behavior.

Bärmann was greatly infatuated with, if not obsessed by, giants and large creatures who were kind and misunderstood. His compassion for these gigantic people and animals is evident in his paintings and illustrations. The moral of the story is simple, while the illustrations are intriguing and suggest deeper meanings. Bärmann seems to have been fond of creating nude angels with wings, as in the illustration of *The Christmas Tree*, in which they are just taking pleasure in decorating the tree. However, in *The Honey Angels*, he seems to be saying that cute little angels can also be sadistic devils with no compassion for ugly-looking creatures like the toad.

Looks are deceiving, and in this case, the gigantic toad is more humane than the angels who act like spoiled brats.

By no means did Bärmann preach to children in his books. As a painter and storyteller, he sought to create fantastic figures to draw attention to the hypocracies of the civilizing process in which charming people take advantage of the common masses. This is also the case in *The Giant Ohl and Tiny Tim*,[2] when Bärmann, again, drew a gigantic creature that appears to be threatening to villagers, who have prejudices against large strangers. This story, which is accompanied by colorful aquarelles, is highly relevant today because it deals with the complexities of immigration and the experiences of "strangers," whose stories deserve to be told.

We learn that the giant Ohl, who lives at the top of a mountain, becomes so lonely that he decides to search for friends in a tiny village called Heide. However, once he arrives, he surprises the villagers, who are petrified by his humongous size. Despite his good intentions—he just wants to work and help other people—he is more or less driven from the village.

> All this hurt Ohl's feelings very much, and he lost his courage. He had wanted to work and live among humans, but they detested him and didn't want him. So, he settled down in a convenient place in the woods and looked critically over the treetops in the little town below. When all this failed to drive away his sadness, he searched for his favorite food, which consisted of pine cones and mushrooms.[3]

Fortunately, Ohl stumbles onto a mushroom field, and after eating almost all the field, he falls asleep. When he awakes the next morning, he encounters an angry Tiny Tim, who scolds him and yells a "socialist" slogan: "Whoever doesn't work, doesn't deserve to eat."[4] Well, work is exactly what Ohl wanted, and soon he provides the help that Tiny Tim needs: his parents had died some time ago, and he was trying to manage the Lindenhof family farm by himself, assisted by his younger brother and sister. The generous and

kind Ohl reorganizes the farm and enchants Tiny Tim and the neighborhood children with stories about the mountain and his encounters with various animals. But the turning point of Ohl's destiny is not his storytelling. It is his concern for his fellow human beings. At one point after he has settled into life on the farm, he and Tiny Tim save the village from a massive fire and then tame three quirky demons from hell who cause trouble and damage in the village.

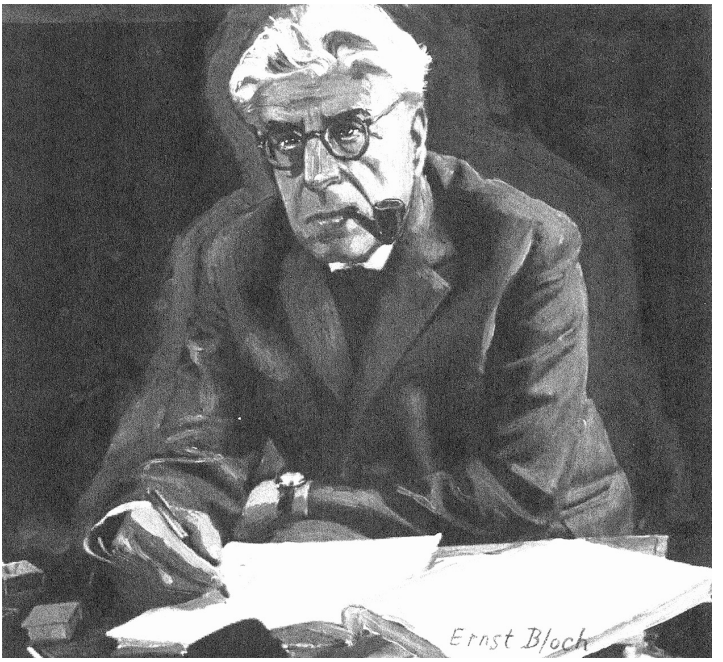
Ohl, the immigrant and outcast, becomes the village's hero. Moreover, when an epidemic strikes the village and Tiny Tim's life is in danger, Ohl challenges Death himself to a battle, for Ohl values his friendship with the boy more than anything in the world. The battle is brutal, but Ohl manages to defeat Death and the epidemic, and all the villagers celebrate Ohl's victory and humanitarian deeds.

Bärmann was an unusual painter and storyteller. His texts and images reveal both his serious critique of social prejudice and his jovial and optimistic perspective on how people might overcome aggressive behavior toward "freaks." Aside from his own work, Bärmann also produced illustrations for Eduard Mörike's *Das Märchen vom sicherern Mann* (*The Fairy Tale about the Man with Confidence*, 1907) and Gustav Meyrink's *Golem* (1915). His place in German cultural history has regrettably been overlooked, for Bärmann died too young to create many fairy tales and unique paintings. Nevertheless, he left traces that indicate he might have contributed meaningful works in both storytelling and painting. Ernst Bloch, the pugnacious philosopher of hope, has used the term *Spuren* (traces) to identify essential signs or marks that might enable us to create the utopian worlds we seek in our hope for a better world. Christian Bärmann left numerous traces behind him that may enrich this hope.

7

Ernst Bloch and Mariette Lydis

THE ART OF DAYDREAMING



Ernst Bloch imagining a better world. (Illustrator unknown.)

WE ALL DREAM. Even my dog dreams. He whines when he dreams because his dreams are filled with anxiety. So are mine. So are yours. They are unsettling and disturbing. We work through the trauma of our lives in dreams, and because they do not leave us happily ever after, they are more like nightmares than pleasant

recapitulations of our daily and eternal struggles. Dreams shock and terrify us because they cannot be controlled. Impulsive, they are their own narrators, and the only way we can resolve their penetrating stories is by interrupting them. Only by jolting ourselves and waking up can we enlighten ourselves. Only by generating daydreams can we take charge of our lives. Nocturnal dreams bring dread and devastating realizations. They leave us stuck in the past. Daydreams provide options and potential joie de vivre. They demand that, despite obstacles and despair, we move onward into the future. They are artful stories. They are the art of utopia and are filled with our wishes and anticipatory illumination. They demand that we become artists and narrators of our lives.

To write, to paint, to act is to envision dreams of where we want to go with our lives, what we want to make out of our lives. Without the art of writing and without our conscious picturing of the ideal other life, there is no hope that our desires will be fulfilled. We need hope, and we need daydreams to map our destiny. We need to act on our daydreams and not slumber into nocturnal nightmares. My father called me, pejoratively, a daydreamer when I was young because I was always imagining some life other than the one arbitrarily chosen for and imposed on me. He used to laugh and say that I lived in another world, and should come down to earth, be practical. Fortunately, I have never come down to earth. I have never stopped daydreaming, and I have never stopped endeavoring to realize my daydreams. We all incorporate daydreams into our daily struggles.

As we know, Freud and Jung, along with several staunch psychologists and psychiatrists at the beginning of the twentieth century, purportedly "discovered" the essence of dreams and developed theories to demonstrate how dreams reveal our traumas, sexual problems, desires, relations with our families, and thwarted wishes. Though their theories were important in a sociohistorical context, we now know that Freud and Jung should have been put on the couch instead of their patients. It would take a book or two—and indeed, several have been written—to show how

misleading their theories were and still are. It is disheartening to read, even today, what Freudians and Jungians write about our inner lives—not to mention about fairy tales.

I prefer to read Ernst Bloch, a neglected brilliant and iconoclastic philosopher, and his notions about daydreams, not nocturnal dreams. Here I briefly discuss his theories about daydreams and then turn to the overlooked Austrian Jewish painter Mariette Lydis, who, I believe, thrived on daydreams and offers proof with her various works that daydreams play an immense and important role in our creative lives.

Contemporaries, Bloch (1885–1977) and Lydis (1887–1970) wrote and painted during the same century as Freud (1856–1939) and Jung (1875–1961). Both were of Jewish origin. Both survived World War I, the Nazis, and World War II. Both kept realizing their desires for a better world through writing and picturing their writing. There seem to be mysterious sociopolitical connections between hundreds if not thousands of European Jewish writers and artists between 1890 and 1940 that propelled them to transform their daydreams into emancipatory writing and art. These connections are at the root of Bloch's iconoclastic philosophy and Lydis's erotic and provocative art. To connect the myriad impulses that prompted them to act on their daydreams would be a challenge. It would take an immense study to demonstrate how vital daydreams were for the survival of so many writers and painters during the first half of the twentieth century. For now, I link traces (*Spuren*) of these vital daydreams through Bloch and Lydis.

Bloch and Lydis lived at a time of trauma and wakening that shook the world. They experienced anti-Semitism, World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the turbulent 1920s, the women's liberation movements, the Great Depression of 1929, the rise of fascism, and numerous civil wars in Europe. Everyone in this period had daydreams of a better life and did not want to live just to survive. Yet millions were victimized by the ruling classes and the enormous pace of socioeconomic change that left most people desperate and lagging behind the technologically transformed and

globalized world. Despite bewildering changes, nobody could stop daydreaming as all sought to taste and devour freedom and social justice. Ernst Bloch and Mariette Lydis were not much different. What distinguishes them are the remarkable philosophical and artistic talents that enabled them to give form and substance to their daydreams.

In 1921, Bloch published his first book, *Geist der Utopie (Spirit of Utopia)*, in Germany. That same year, in Vienna, Lydis finished her faux-Chinese paintings and had them published as illustrations in *The Cloak of Dreams* (1922), with original tales written by the radical writer Béla Balázs, a Hungarian Jew who had fled Budapest after the failed 1919 revolution. There is a very good chance that Bloch, Lydis, and Balázs crossed paths in Berlin during the 1920s. Whether this occurred or not, they sensed the same spirit of utopia that was in the air at that time. In 1921, Balázs wrote a letter to the Hungarian writer Anna Lesznai stating that "Everything depends on our spiritualizing communism into a religion. That is our mission. There are so many today with hungry hearts, more than ever before."[1]

Daydreams could not fill their hungry hearts but kept them creating other worlds in their writings and drawings. These artists were constantly on the run because of their daydreams. Bloch and his wife, Karola, lived and worked in a left-wing community in Berlin during the 1920s and early 1930s. Owing to their political activities, they had to flee the Nazis in 1933. After brief stops in Switzerland and Austria, they landed in Paris, where Lydis was working. While there, Bloch participated in the International Congress for the Defense of Culture (June 21–25) and gave a speech titled "Literature and Socialist Objects," in which he introduced his notion of *Vor-Schein,* or "anticipatory illumination," and spoke out against the pessimism of many writers who doubted that Marxism could combat the expansion of fascism. According to Bloch, "truth is not the reflection of facts but of processes; it is ultimately the indication of the tendency and latency of that which has not yet become and needs its activator."[2] For Bloch, literature

and art contain the anticipatory illumination of that which has not become, and the role of the writer and artist is similar to that of a midwife who enables the creative conception of the latent and potential materials to assume their own unique forms. At this point in his life, Bloch was committed both philosophically and aesthetically to Marxism as the *only* critique that could clarify what was missing in life, what obstacles had to be overcome before a classless society could come into its own, and what direction *we* had to take, for the realization of individual autonomy was possible only if *we* came into our own as the collective agent of our own destiny.

However, Bloch hardly had time to develop his major theories in the 1930s, when he and his wife were moving from country to country to escape the fascists. Eventually, they decided to take advantage of an offer to emigrate to the United States, where they spent eleven years (1938–1949), the first three in New York and New Hampshire, and the last eight in Boston, where Bloch worked diligently in Harvard University's Widener Library on various parts of *The Principle of Hope* and *Subjekt-Objekt*. Ironically, it was in capitalist America that Bloch was free to work entirely on the three volumes of *The Principle of Hope*, which were later published in East Germany, where he became a professor of philosophy at the University of Leipzig in 1949.

The Principle of Hope is an enormous work consisting of fifty-five chapters in which Bloch endeavored to map out the formations of the not-yet-conscious as they take shape in daydreams, wish landscapes, and religious, scientific, political, and artistic events of signification. The signification can be traced in the anticipatory illumination and is determined by the manner in which it gives rise to hope within the cultural heritage. The centrality of art and literature in Bloch's chiliastic Marxism—that is, the emphasis he placed on the *possibility* of the transformation of the material base through superstructural developments—is apparent throughout the three volumes. Despite many inconsistencies, *The Principle of Hope* recalls concrete moments in history and illuminates their

human creative features as indelible marks that point the way toward actual transformation of our material world. The luminous aesthetic quality of these concrete moments, even if they are fragmentary like daydreams, allows them to be utilized and reutilized for realizing what has not yet become but can become—namely, the building blocks for a classless society. Insofar as the aesthetic formations illuminate what is missing and might still come, they instill hope in viewers/readers and provide the impetus for individual and collective change.

To understand the significance of Mariette Lydis's "dreamwork" via Bloch, I focus primarily on the initial chapters in volume 1 of *The Principle of Hope* because they shed light on how artists and writers need and transform daydreams into works of art. The most important aspect of Bloch's work is the distinction he makes between sleeping dreams and waking dreams. Here he takes issue with Freud and Jung and argues that nocturnal dreams do not enable people or psychologists to grasp fundamental problems of existence, in particular, the wish-fulfillment aspirations that most individuals have. If we assume that we all want to lead the lives that we desire and wish to realize, nocturnal dreams will not benefit us. As he writes in *The Principle of Hope*, three characteristic qualities of this type of dream diminish their significance: (1) the ego is weakened in sleep and cannot censor damaging thoughts; (2) at the end of the day, only the dregs remain from the waking state—that is, wish-fulfillment dreams are no longer associated with the experience of the day and cause regression; (3) the outside world with its practicality and realities is blocked, and the ego reverts to the ego of childhood. If nocturnal dreams are difficult to decipher, they do not enable the dreamer to sort out the obstacles that prevent him or her from realizing wishes and coping with reality. In conclusion, Bloch writes: "Thus almost no night dream is wish-fulfillment pure and simple, but almost everyone is distorted and masked, appears in 'symbolic' disguise. And the person who is dreaming does not understand the symbolic element at all, in which his or her wish-fulfillment disguises itself; it suffices here

that the restlessness of the libido activates and satiates itself in a symbolically distorting dream-image."[3]

Bloch was fully aware that it is impossible to prevent the distortions of the nocturnal dream, and he was concerned that Freud and Jung incorporated wish fulfillments into anxiety dreams, causing all wishful emotions to become phobias in the realm of the unconscious. Without censorship, nightly dreams ride roughshod over wishes. We cannot discover who we are, what we want, and how we might attain our wishes. In short, it is better to be a daydreamer than a sufferer of nightmares.

In his insightful study *Daydreaming: Using Waking Fantasy and Imagery for Self-Knowledge and Creativity* (1990), the eminent psychologist Eric Klinger points out that daydreaming includes about half of the average person's daily mental activity, and that daydreams are to be taken seriously:

> All advanced civilizations impose on us a heavy degree of regimentation. Individuals are required to sacrifice their individuality—their natural biological cycles of sleeping and waking, hunger and satiety, sexual desire and sexual surfeit, and even the attitudes they dare to express—to the obligations of social integration. You are expected to get to work on time, obey military orders, serve your superiors, pay your taxes and debts, and keep your word, however long ago you gave it. Daydreams, on the other hand, reflect your utmost needs, your feelings, and your preferred plans. They remind you and can occasionally incite you to stick up for yourself against your surroundings. To people in charge of order, the defenders and apologists for the established civilization, they constitute potential resistance—collectively, at least a nuisance, and in extreme cases, a menace.[4]

Forty years before Klinger made these comments, Bloch wrote something very similar in *The Principle of Hope*:

> The first property of the waking dream is that it is not oppressive. It remains within our power, the ego starts out on a journey into

> the blue, but ends it whenever it wants. However relaxed the dreamer may be, he is not abducted or overpowered by his images, they are not independent enough for this. Real things do appear muted, they are often distorted, but they never completely vanish in the face of the wished-for images, however subjective. And day dream images are not normally hallucinated, so they return from the most remote flight of fancy at a moment's notice. There is no spell in this condition, at least none which the daydreamer has not voluntarily imposed on himself, and which he could not revoke. The waking dreamhouse is also furnished exclusively with ideas chosen by the daydreamer himself whereas the sleeper never knows what is awaiting him beyond the threshold of the subconscious.[5]

For Bloch, we are all creators and carriers of daydreams. We all have a conscious will for a better life. Consequently, the hero of our daydreams is always our own adult character. We persevere and are determined through the wish fulfillments that we create to seize moments of anticipatory illumination and make them come true. And if they do not come true right away, they are stored for later realization—signs and traces that we must keep following.

Citing Freud, Bloch maintains that daydreams are the raw material of poetic production,[6] but he goes further than Freud in his endeavors to understand the utopian signification of daydreams. While he was interested in the illuminating aspects that daydreams forged for individuals, he also focused on the consequences they had for art and for a better world. Unlike the psychologists and psychiatrists of the twentieth century, who were transfixed by Freud's ideas, Bloch's notions were politically expansive and valuable for understanding how art derives from daydreams. "Because it is common property," he wrote, "the daydream extends both into the *broad and into the deep expanse,* into the non-sublimated, but in fact concentrated expanse, into that of the utopian dimensions. And this automatically posits the better world also as the more beautiful, in the sense of completed images, the like of which

have not been seen on earth. Through planning or forming, windows are hewn in deprivation, hardness, rawness, banality, with distant prospects, full of light. *The daydream as a stepping-stone to art* so very obviously intends world improvement, has this as its robustly real character. . . . Art contains this utopianizing character by virtue of the daydream, not as a frivolously gilding character, but as one which also contains renunciation and which, though the latter is certainly not conquered by art alone, is not forgotten within it either, but embraced by joy as the figure that is approaching."[7]

Throughout *The Principle of Hope,* Bloch, somewhat idealistically, seeks to substantiate daydreams as the realistic blocks of hope. In particular, he was convinced that art played a vital role in engendering hope, forming and shaping images that enable individuals to see more clearly what conditions need to be created for the formation of a better world. Of course, we must be careful and acknowledge that daydreams can mislead: fascists daydream, as do religious fanatics, pedophiles, mass murderers, corrupt bankers, as well as postal workers, seamstresses, bakers, bus drivers, and so on. Daydreams are not neutral. They can inspire us to work for the poor yet can also lead us to tread on the poor. When Bloch talks about the utopian quality of daydreams, he specifically means a daydream with wish fulfillments that will further social justice in the world as well as the humane and compassionate drives that will make social justice stronger. He means that we must keep struggling to walk with an upright gait (*der aufrechte Gang*). As long as we submit to the repressive and oppressive forces that keep us stooped like apes, we shall never learn what it means to walk upright and work in the name of humanity. For Bloch, art and writing have no meaning unless they are motivated by specific daydreams with a distinct configuration which leads to emancipation from systems that exploit our creativity for profit.

Nobody could exploit Mariette Lydis's artworks for profit. An indomitable daydreamer, she refused to submit to oppressive forces. Indeed, a short summary of her life reveals how she endeavored to remain true to her daydreams, which formed and transformed her life.

She was born in Baden near Vienna as Marietta Ronsperger on August 24, 1887. Very little is known about her youth, for she was reluctant to write about her personal life. Nevertheless, thanks to a recent meticulous and comprehensive biography, *En busca de Mariette Lydis,* by the renowned Argentine scholar Jorge Luis Correa, many aspects and facts of her youth have been discovered and documented.[8] We now know that she was raised in a well-to-do Jewish family in Vienna at a time when this city experienced a kind of cultural golden age. Before World War I, the fin de siècle was often referred to as the belle époque in Vienna. Some of the most innovative Austrian artists, musicians, and dramatists thrived and influenced others in Central Europe. Mariette's father, Franz Ronsperger, a merchant of clocks and watches, was not inclined to support this cultural movement or his daughter's interest in the arts, however. Consequently, she disliked her father for maltreating her and her mother, a poet and musician, with whom she had a close relationship. Mariette was the youngest in the family. She had a brother, Richard, who had to be hospitalized most of his life, and a sister, Edith, who died by suicide in 1921. Though well-connected to the Jewish community, the Ronsperger family was not religious, and in fact, Mariette converted to Catholicism in 1911. A gifted musician, she attended a private school for girls directed by liberal women who supported radical causes in Austria. Although exposed to music, art, and theater at her school and at various museums, and given the benefit of a progressive liberal arts education, she did not initially seem inclined to turn to painting as a career. In fact, she married a wealthy merchant, Julius Kololman Pachhofer-Karny, in 1910 and separated from her family. With time and freedom on her hands, she began "dabbling" in art and took courses at the School of Art at Zweibhrück and other places in Austria. When World War I erupted in 1914, she was somewhat traumatized by the violence and, in 1915, was shaken by the death of her husband. It is not by chance, then, that she decided to devote herself to a serious study of art to deal with her emotions and

to express herself as candidly as possible. Her daydreams undoubtedly fostered this decision.

Conditions in Vienna were difficult during the war, and as soon as it ended, Mariette left and spent 1918–1924 mainly in Athens or near the city. This was a crucial time for the self-educated Mariette, who spent most of her time experimenting by herself with different art forms. After marrying Jean Lydis, a Greek millionaire, in 1920, she began to exhibit some of her paintings and traveled a great deal to Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Russia, and France. By 1923, she left her husband, and while living near Florence, she met the popular Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli and began an affair. In 1926, she traveled to France with Bontempelli, who introduced her to intellectual and artistic circles in Paris, which she more or less made her home until 1939. Within a few years, Lydis established a name for herself as a gifted painter, engraver, and illustrator.

In 1928, she had an affair with well-known writer Joseph Delteil and illustrated one of his books, *Le petit Jésus*. That same year, she began another affair, with the art publisher of Les Presses de l'Hôtel Sagonne, Comte Giuseppe Govone, whom she married on August 1, 1934. While in Paris, Lydis continued to have great success as a painter, engraver, and illustrator. She became a member and juror of the Salon d'Automne and had a solo exhibit at the Galerie Bernheim Jeune as well as exhibits in London and New York. She also illustrated numerous books by French authors, including Henry de Montherlant, Paul Valéry, Pierre Louÿs, Paul Verlaine, and Jules Supervielle. She was a close friend of Montherlant, who edited a book of her illustrations and paintings in 1949.[9] By 1937, she had left Govone and was involved in an affair with Erica Marx, her editor at Les Presses de l'Hôtel Sagonne and the niece of Karl Marx. In August of 1939, they fled the Nazis and made their way to Winchcombe, a small village near London, where Lydis was able to work and prepare an exhibit to be held in Buenos Aires. In September of 1939, Lydis registered as a Jew and was therefore allowed to embark for Argentina. Soon after she

arrived, she decided to remain there out of fear of bombardments and a possible German invasion of England.

Alone at first in Argentina, Lydis soon formed friendships and became active as a painter and illustrator. After World War II, Govone joined her in Buenos Aires, where he established himself briefly as a publisher and produced some of her works. By 1948, however, they decided to return to Paris, and shortly afterward, Govone died in Milan. For the next few years, Lydis remained in Paris and continued to work for numerous French publishers and illustrated books by Guy de Maupassant, Colette, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Bella Moerel as well as *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. Lydis is also said to have had a close relationship with the aviator Amelia Earhart about this time. Concerned about the threat of another war in Europe, she returned to Buenos Aires in the early 1950s but retained most of her contacts with publishers and writers in Paris, which she visited every now and then. She called Buenos Aires her home and resided there until her death on April 26, 1970.

According to Lydis, her life was a dream, a daydream, a wish fulfillment. After reading the brief biography above, however, one might wonder whether her life wasn't more a nightmare than a daydream. Indeed, she was born to be killed, like other Jews of that period, and honed and refined at a finishing school to become the cultured wife of some notable Viennese bourgeois who would have dominated her—another kind of murder. Yet Lydis remained optimistic throughout her life and endeavored to live and work the way she chose and desired. She clearly wanted to embody her daydreams.

In the introduction to her book *Mariette Lydis*, published in 1945 in Buenos Aires, she wrote: "Some time ago in Paris, I responded to the magazine *L'Intransigeant*, which posed this question to various artists: 'What do you desire in your most secret dreams?' and I responded, 'I desire nothing more than what I already possess. Even more, I have everything I desire.' And that is the truth. Every second of my life I recognize my exceptional

happiness. If a person has accomplished everything in a life that has been more than filled and that has been beautiful, she doesn't have the right to complain. The fates have been kind to me, and I don't complain. Even though destiny has taken away the people who constituted my most concentrated happiness, the most exclusive, the fruit of my work blessed by success, my home there."[10]

In another passage, she wrote:

> My work is what constitutes and builds my happiness. It is my reason for living. It is my impassioned interest that is at the bottom of everything. At present it is more an homage, a testimony to those who have departed. Look, I do not permit myself very much to be discouraged. I do not search for excuses. I do not allow myself to be beaten, annihilated.
>
> My work is my refuge. I supply it with my happiness, my concerns, my anxieties, and my pleasures. It is there that I depose all that I possess.
>
> Painting is for me a passion, a prison, an evasion. Without it, I feel useless. I don't love myself. I work well with the result that I am happy. I encounter difficulties. I don't have ideas how to overcome them. Sometimes I am thrown into somber despair.
>
> I still cannot believe in my happiness to be able to paint whenever I desire and certainly I cannot believe that the world around me has facilitated this passion. In general, in my life, passions are those things that hinder you. In my case, however, it is not only just around me, but everything is made for encouraging this passion to paint, and again my existence in it is completely illuminated.[11]

"Illuminate" is an important word and concept when it comes to understanding Mariette Lydis and how she used daydreams to illuminate her art and her art to illuminate her daydreams. But how do *we* illuminate and "order" categorically a neglected painter like Lydis who transformed her life through painting, writing, and dreaming? She did not belong to a school of painters. She refused to be ordered. She was constantly learning and innovating until

her death. Here I try to illuminate three phases of her artwork: first in Greece, 1919–1929, then in Paris, 1929–1939, and finally in Buenos Aires and Paris, 1941–1970. We must also bear in mind that she traveled to Berlin, London, New York, and other places during her lifetime where she exhibited her art and worked while exhibiting.

Let us turn first to Greece, when she began developing her "raw" talents in lithography, drawing, illustrating, water coloring, and oils. She herself arranged for the publication of five books that she wrote and/or illustrated: *Der Mantel der Träume* (*The Cloak of Dreams*, 1922), *Miniaturen zum Koran* (Miniatures for the Koran, 1924), *Die verliebten Billete des Prinzen Salamund* (The Amorous Letters of the Prince Salamund, 1924), *Orientalisches Traumbuch* (Oriental Book of Dreams, 1925), and *Le Livre de Goha le simple* (The Book of Simple Goha, 1926).

What is characteristic of her early work is her use of the collotype process and exquisite Chinese graphic art. "The collotype process is a screenless photomechanical process that allows high-quality prints from continuous-tone photographic negatives. The process uses heat and cold water–treated dichromate-sensitized gelatin—which tends to reticulate—to create a random micro pattern. . . . Many color collotypes were produced by hand painting (coloring, tinting) printed monochrome collotypes. Larger, more sophisticated hand-painted collotypes need microscopic investigation to identify the hand application of colors. Some smaller hand-painted collotypes produced in large quantities can be quickly identified by the observation of color fields reaching over the collotype-delineated outlines in the image surface micropattern."[12] The illustrations from *The Cloak of Dreams, The Amorous Letters of the Prince Salamund,* and *The Oriental Book of Dreams* show that Lydis mastered this technique in her early phase.

From the very beginning of her career as a professional painter, Lydis envisioned her collotypes, drawings, and oil and watercolor paintings as surrealistic dreams. Lydis had a great talent for imagining incidents that take place in other writers' stories and endowing the illustrations with deeper meaning, sometimes in

contradiction to the written text. Rarely did she write her own texts as in *The Oriental Book of Dreams*. She tended to write herself into other people's tales through her images or to inspire other artists to write tales based on her exotic images as in the case of *The Cloak of Dreams,* written by Belá Balázs, whom she hired to create faux Chinese tales within two weeks. Lydis tended to include eroticism, nude women, strange animals, and provocative figures in all her lithographs, paintings, and sketches. She rarely portrayed men, unless they were major characters in a narrative. As a female, bisexual painter, she liberated herself from the prude and hypocritical European civilizing processes through her paintings.

Once she became more confident after her initial success and moved to Paris, she changed her style and method of painting in a major way. As Christian Maryska notes: "Whereas she had concentrated hitherto on drawings and watercolors, she now focused on etching and lithography and began to paint in oils. The content also changed. Her subjects were lesbians, prostitutes, women in prison and psychiatric hospitals, and she drew in places of amusement like nightclubs, revue theaters, and the circus, becoming a 'chronicler' of the 'other' Paris."[13]

Indeed, her paintings, prints, and illustrations consistently have a flair for the erotic and demonstrate great nuance and delicacy. Henry de Montherlant stated that she "always pursued the other thing that was in each thing, the many things that are in each thing."[14] She herself wrote, "My first efforts—my first interest—concentrated on portraying poor people, the old men, the dispossessed, the criminals, and the sick. I wanted to depict how much sadness there is in the world. . . . Later my vision became brighter. I began to see the beauty in softness, in candor, and this manifested itself in a number of drawings and paintings of women, adolescents, and children."[15] Throughout her career, she painted with an eye toward revealing the essence of the human condition. Working with pastels, charcoal, oil, and ink, she continued to show a unique capacity to illustrate literary works and to produce original portraits and still life paintings. Always open-minded, she had

a great interest in surrealism. Many of her prints and illustrations deal with controversial topics and poses.

The eruption of World War II shocked Lydis, who feared the Nazis would discover her Jewish origins. This is why she left for England soon after the French army was defeated and spent a year with Erica Marx in Winchcombe, where she was able to do some painting that reflected her anxieties and concerns. She was particularly fearful of the Nazi bombardment of England and desired to leave as soon as possible. Not until she departed for Argentina with numerous other Austrian Jews did she begin to find peace in herself and wish for peace in the world.

Lydis was never directly political in her artwork, and yet there was always a radical side to her, for she clearly sympathized with the outsider and underdog. Her astute biographer, Jorge Luis Correa, remarks that we cannot imagine the conditions of anxiety and stress under which she worked and reflected in all the works she produced, especially after she left Paris in 1939.[16] Many of her friends fled Austria and France. Often they were killed, interned in concentration camps, or died by suicide. Her political and humane perspective can be seen in three oil collages: *Malice and Hatred* (1940), *Oracle* (1942), and *Bergen-Belsen* (1947). She herself summarized her views in the plaque beneath the painting *Malice and Hatred*:

> From envy, malice, and hatred, and all uncharitableness . . . from battle . . . murder . . . from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart and contempt of thy Word and Commandment . . . Good Lord, deliver us.[17]

Moreover, she made no bones about her lesbianism and sought to portray the beauty of women's bodies in all her drawings and sketches. This is not to say that she had a one-sided ideological perspective. On the contrary, she also wrote and illustrated children's books such as André Lichtenberger's *Angomar et Priscilla* (1933), *Le trèfle à quatre feuilles, ou La clef du bonheur* (*The Four-Leaf Clover, or The Key to Happiness*, 1935), and André Demaison's *Bêtes*

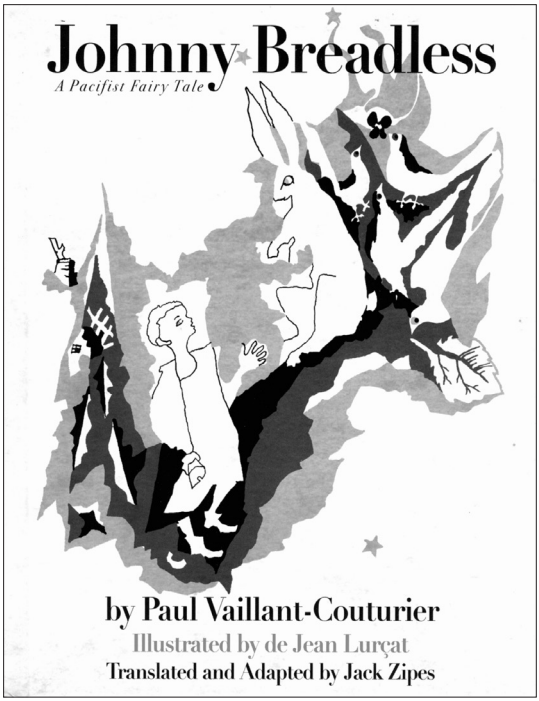
sur la Terre et dans le Ciel (*Animals on the Earth and in the Sky*, 1936). Her openness, sincerity, and frankness infuse her drawings, whether they include women, men, children, or animals. *The Four-Leaf Clover, or The Key to Happiness* begins this way: "This book is dedicated especially to woman, that fragile being without any defenses, weak and indecisive, who has great need of a secret support to guide her. May she consult this book like a great friend whom she can trust at each test, may she confide in all its advice, may she confide all her questions about love to this book during the critical periods of her youth and also when she becomes a mother. Moreover, may her companion equally not neglect to consult this veritable friend in all his financial and amorous enterprises. Never again will you be obliged to exclaim with tears in your eyes: 'Oh, if I only had known about this before!'"[18]

This tiny book of lithographs harks back to one of her first, *The Oriental Book of Dreams*, and ends with advice on how to fulfill one's greatest wish. There is no guarantee that wishes and dreams will be fulfilled. More important is the realization that daydreaming is the motivator of happiness.

Mariette Lydis, Ernst Bloch, and many of their compatriots were born at the end of the nineteenth century during revolutionary and grim times. They did not allow their nocturnal dreams and nightmares to deter them from living the lives they desired and imagined through daydreams or dreams of enlightenment. They did not lie on the couches of Freud and Jung and delve narcissistically into their personal troubles and sorrows. Instead, they looked for light in their imaginative paintings and writing. Sometimes they stumbled and made mistakes, but they never abandoned the daydreams that gave them the strength to withstand the terrors of their times.

8

Paul Vaillant-Couturier's War against War


Johnny Breadless
A Pacifist Fairy Tale
by Paul Vaillant-Couturier
Illustrated by de Jean Lurçat
Translated and Adapted by Jack Zipes

Johnny Breadless. (Illustration by Jean Lurçat.)

DURING WORLD WAR I, at Christmastime in 1914, sudden, widespread, unofficial ceasefires took place along the Eastern Front, organized by French, British, and German soldiers. They crossed trenches to exchange food, souvenirs, and ideas. In some cases,

they played soccer, sang Christmas carols, held burial ceremonies, and exchanged prisoners of war. Christmas ceasefires were also held at various places in 1915. By 1916, however, the so-called Great War had become more bitter and divisive, and the officers in the French, British, and German armies squashed the ceasefires. Killing was much more important than peacemaking.

Paul Vaillant-Couturier (1892–1937) was one of the French soldiers among those who celebrated truce. As a young man from a well-to-do bourgeois family in Paris, he had never thought he would one day fight for France and kill Germans. His parents were successful singers, actors, and artists, and as he indicated in his fictional autobiography, *The French Boy* (1931), he was groomed to become a professional lawyer or engineer. An exceptional student, he attended one of the best lycées in Paris and later enrolled at the Sorbonne. At the same time, he wrote poems and plays and was regarded as a kind of Bohemian artist. Though he eventually became a lawyer, he did not practice much. Instead, he followed in his parents' footsteps and became an artist. In 1912 and 1913, he wrote plays and poems, painted, and published essays in an anarchistic journal. He did not take politics very seriously and led a carefree life until he enlisted in the French army in 1913 to defend life and liberty in France.

From 1914 to 1916, Vaillant-Couturier served in the infantry and participated in the brutal war of the trenches. During this time, he began writing critical articles about the war for various newspapers. It was clear from his viewpoint that he had become much more of a socialist and pacifist than a "Bohemian artist." He had come to realize that thousands of young French men and women were considered insignificant creatures or tools, whose basic value was to protect and serve the interests of the ruling classes. After being wounded in 1916, he did not leave the army out of dedication to the troops with whom he was serving. He joined the artillery corps as a lieutenant in 1917 and almost died from a gas attack in 1918. Despite his injuries, he kept opposing and exposing the contradictory policies of the generals and officers in various

newspapers and magazines. Consequently, he was sentenced to thirty days in prison for being too outspoken about warmongers. By the time he was belatedly discharged from the army in 1919, he decided to abandon his career as an artist and to devote himself to politics, namely, to bring about greater social justice and democracy in France. This did not mean that he stopped writing altogether. He wrote about his war experiences in *La guerre des soldats* (The War of Soldiers, 1919) and *Lettres à mes amis* (Letters to My Friends, 1920), and he continued writing poems. His major contribution to European culture at that time, however, was his book for children, *Jean sans pain* (*Johnny Breadless*, 1921), illustrated by the talented Jean Picart Le Doux (1902–1982), who shared his political views. Vaillant-Couturier did not believe in mincing his words or lying to children, and this extraordinary revolutionary book, a pacifist fairy tale, was to have an influence on writers in France and Germany as it paved the way for many progressive books for children.

Owing to his popularity as a journalist and his service during the war, Vaillant-Couturier was elected as a deputy representing the district where he was living in Paris, and in 1920, he became one of the founders of the newly formed Communist Party. Thanks to his interventions, especially his critique of fascism and the exploitation of French workers, he was reelected deputy in 1924. Once he moved to the suburb of Villejuif, which, at that time, was a working-class district, Vaillant-Couturier assumed the position of editor of the daily communist newspaper *L'Humanité*. Known for his integrity and skill as an orator, Vaillant-Couturier spent the 1920s developing the newspaper and strengthening the Communist Party, even though he often disagreed with its policies. His major aim, aside from representing the people in his district, was to further an international cultural movement that would contribute to a more humane and just society. Vaillant-Couturier resigned as editor of *L'Humanité* in 1929 owing to political differences but did not abandon his commitment to communism. In the 1930s, he kept writing and giving talks against fascism and

played an important role in the movement to form a Front Populaire of workers, farmers, and the middle class against the Nazis and other right-wing parties in Europe.

In 1933, he returned to *L'Humanité* as editor and continued writing political articles, pamphlets, plays, and poetry in support of efforts by European writers to form a socialist federation. Nor did Vaillant-Couturier forget his commitment to write books for children. One of his most insightful books was *Le malheur d'être jeune* (The Misfortune of Being Young, 1933), which depicted the unenviable situation of young people in France during the 1930s:

> Before the war, to be young meant to have a full life ahead of oneself.
>
> During the war, to be young meant to have death ahead of oneself.
>
> Today, to be young means to have a miserable life ahead of oneself.
>
> Certain older people keep telling the young, "You are lucky to be young . . ."
>
> Well, not really! To be young today means to have the misfortune of being young.
>
> This is horrific. This goes against nature. That's evident.
>
> But that's how things are.
>
> Why?[1]

Angry and provocative, Valliant-Couturier spent the last seven years of his life writing books dealing with the dilemma of the young during perverse times. Aside from republishing *Jean sans pain* in 1933 with significant changes, he contributed an unusual fable called *Histoire d'âne pauvre et de cochon gras* (The Story of a Poor Donkey and a Fat Pig, 1935) to a new series called *Mon Comrade*, published by Éditions Sociales Internationales, which produced modern political books for children. However, 1935 was not a fortunate year for him. An unknown assailant attempted to murder him. He survived the attack, but two years later, in 1937, he died, apparently from repercussions of this attack.

Before his death, as mentioned above, Vaillant-Couturier somehow found time to rework and republish *Jean sans pain*, deleting some religious motifs and making the book more strident, didactic, and revolutionary. These changes reflect, I believe, Vaillant-Couturier's own transformation, which made him more strident in fighting for socialism, especially after the devastating effects of the Great Depression in 1929 throughout Europe and the rising danger of fascism in Italy, Spain, Germany, and, of course, France throughout the 1930s.

The new edition of *Jean sans pain* was illustrated by the great innovative artist Jean Lurçat (1892–1966). Lurçat's expressionist images are quite different from those of Jean Picart Le Doux, whose watercolor images in the first edition of 1921 are more traditional yet strikingly provocative. The first edition was filled with hope that the world can change, whereas the second edition of 1933, with Lurçat's satirical and somewhat abstract images, reveals a godless world in which the bitter struggle to bring about peace and harmony must continue.

Surprisingly, Picart Le Doux, whose final image in the first edition depicted a sunny future with a worker and a peasant shaking hands, was chosen to collaborate with Valliant-Couturier on his satirical picture book *The Story of a Poor Donkey and a Fat Pig*. One would think that Valliant-Couturier would have chosen Lurçat because his highly cynical fable is more in accord with Lurçat's style. However, the collaboration worked because of the gentle way Picart Le Doux depicts the events that lead to the slaughter of the pig. The seemingly serene fable concerns a poor donkey on a farm in the Pyrenees, where Vaillant-Couturier used to spend his summers as a child; this donkey must pull a supercilious rosy fat pig in a cart to the farm after it is bought. The donkey is constantly beaten by the farmer to make him work harder, and insulted by the pompous pig, who is treated like a king so that he will eat and become fatter for a feast to take place several months later. The pig is arrogant and mocks the donkey, who becomes emaciated from all the work he must do, while the pig becomes so fat that he can

barely move. At the end of the fable, the donkey is retained and treated better while the pig is slaughtered and roasted for a huge feast. Whether this is really a tale for children is debatable. However, it appeared in a new series of political books for children, and of course, there is a metaphorical lesson for young and old that pertains to the way laborers were treated in France.

Vaillant-Couturier did not avoid describing the brutality of life for the young. This can also be seen in both editions of *Jeans sans pain*, which I have translated as *Johnny Breadless*,[2] but neither version is as brutal as the fable about the donkey. In his extraordinary fairy tale, which is also a coming-of-age narrative, one feels more compassion and hope for common people than a dark description of their situation. Johnny is a young ten-year-old boy who has already lost his father in World War I and is devastated when his mother dies from overwork in a factory. The war is still being waged, and it seems there is no place for the boy in this world. In despair, he runs off into the forest, stops a poacher from killing a small animal, and then encounters a strange talking rabbit. He cannot believe when the rabbit tells him that the animals in the forest want to reward him and make him smile, for he has never smiled in his life. Consequently, they want to take him on a trip and show him the realities of the world so that he can better understand his situation. When the surprised Johnny accepts the invitation, the rabbit takes off his ears, which are used as propellers for a plane formed by pheasants, and off they fly to a factory, a luxurious party held by corrupt politicans and religious leaders, and the front line of the battle where soldiers celebrate the famous Christmas truce of 1914. On all the visits, the rabbit shows Johnny how workers are exploited while the rich enjoy themselves and have no concern about common people. In the end, Johnny smiles during the last stop, when soldiers turn on the rich people who have abused them and take them away as criminals. To a certain extent, the unusual hard learning Johnny undergoes describes the education that all French youngsters, according to Vaillant-Couturier, needed but never received. The message is heartfelt and sincere.

The reason for the sincerity and emotional appeal of Vaillaint-Couturier's pacifist fairy tale is a strong desire to avoid what he himself experienced during World War I. In one of the notable essays he wrote after 1919, he explains:

> I learned how to be a soldier.
>
> Fifty-two months, I was a soldier for nothing.
>
> However, I grasped what "to serve" meant.
>
> I already had a taste for order. I learned the greatness of discipline and subordination of the individual for the group. The total gift of self-sacrifice.
>
> The tumult of the war, the dreadful waste of international murder, the anarchy of destruction, the savage individualism that ran amuck—all this gave me an intense thirst for a different constructive order. . . .
>
> The order of a new civilization must be larger and embrace the winds of other civilizations.
>
> I was a soldier of entitlement in the company of Senegalese, Madagascans, Anamites, Indians and Hindus. You can imagine the lessons I learned!
>
> Just as I did, they, too, fought for nothing. For worse than nothing, to reinforce the exploitation of their races.
>
> From then on I acquired the passionate desire to be a soldier of a living idea, to obey an agreed upon just discipline, after having first submitted to the mechanical discipline of the bourgeois army.
>
> And so I became a militant. That's to say, a soldier for life. Combatant of the Internationale.[3]

To a great extent, this passage explains the philosophy behind Johnny's coming of age in Vaillant-Couturier's stunning fairy tale. No more really needs to be said except that this book should be on the reading list of all young people throughout the world.

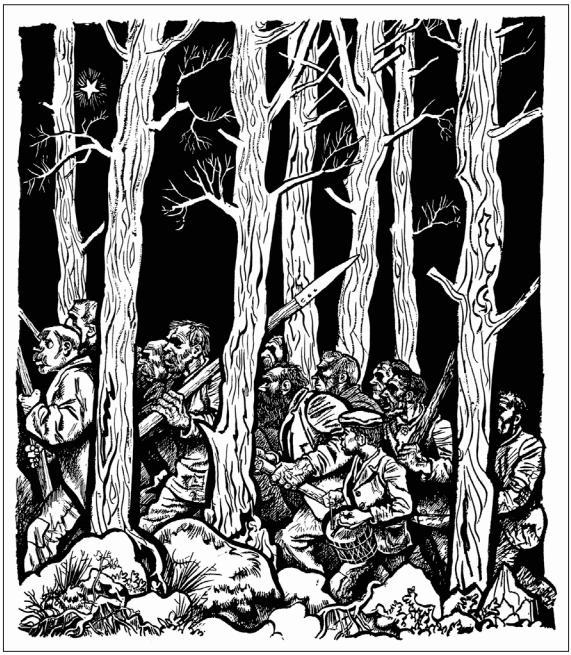
Vaillant-Couturier was not alone in his effort to develop a new, more radical approach to children education through literature and painting, and many other European writers joined him in the

1920s, seeking to change the nature of children's literature and speaking truth to power. In one of the most important studies of children's literature between the two world wars, *Écrire pour la jeunesse en France et en Allemagne dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (2011), Mathilde Lévêque cites Vaillant-Couturier's work as the key to understanding the rise of a different children's literature in the twentieth century.[4] Given what one might call the misfortune of being young in the twenty-first century, Vaillant-Couturier's fairy tale demands a second life and assessment so that we can all learn how to smile.

9

Hermynia Zur Mühlen

THE RED COUNTESS AND HER REVOLUTIONARY VISION



Men on the march. (Illustration by Karl Holtz.)

INTELLIGENCE, liveliness of mind, sensibility, taste, and charm have made her a truly good fairy. A stray dog, abandoned by its master, a poor devil without a penny to his name or a roof over his head, a lost soul—she takes them all equally under her wing. She has nothing in

> common with communist officials mechanically and bureaucratically working their eight-hour-day shifts. Although she has not yet lost her illusions about the Party leadership, she retains great independence of mind, and her horizons are in no way limited. . . . Everyone who understands that revolutionary art is not just phraseology, everyone who is on the look-out for a creative and joyful talent responds to the great literary gifts and the free spirit of Hermynia Zur Mühlen.
>
> —HENRI GUILBEAUX, *DIE WELTBÜHNE* (JULY 8, 1930)

Hermynia Zur Mühlen disobeyed all the rules of proper behavior that were part of her aristocratic upbringing in Austrian upper-class society. From childhood onward, she questioned these arbitrary social codes and rarely minced her words in an effort to find and speak the truth in the face of oppression and hypocrisy. Consequently, she betrayed her class and became one of the most outspoken and prolific left-wing authors of the early twentieth century, who sought to revolutionize both children and adults through her writings, especially through her provocative fairy tales. Ironically, in pursuit of a better world, the life she led was anything but a fairy tale.

Born on December 12, 1883, in Vienna, Hermine Isabella Maria Folliot de Crenneville was destined to lead a life of luxury, but the circumstances of her early childhood caused her to revolt against destiny. An only child, Hermynia was neglected by her narcissistic mother and disciplined by her strict father, a career diplomat, to learn the rules of etiquette and aristocratic behavior so that she could appropriately represent her family and marry well. She never felt loved or understood by either of her parents. In contrast, her British grandmother, Isabella Gräfin von Wydenbruck, provided her support and encouraged her to cultivate liberal ideas, as did her favorite, eccentric uncle, Anton. By the time Hermynia

turned eleven, she formed a political group with several friends called the Anchor Society, and the radical politics of this society signaled the direction her life would take until her death. As she wrote in her bestselling 1929 memoir, *Ende und Anfang: Ein Lebensbuch* (*The End and the Beginning: The Book of My Life*), "After intense study of the 'social question' from my eleventh to twelfth years, which for me was exclusively a question of politics and had nothing to do with economics, I reached the conclusion that since the year '48, when the brave and generous bourgeoisie had taken to the barricades, nothing had been done for the improvement of the world. But now I had come along and would take matters in hand. Down with the aristocrats!"[1]

Of course, she never realized her project, but her revolutionary spirit did not abate over the years. In fact, she remained dedicated to socialist ideas throughout her life. But first, she encountered numerous obstacles before she could lead the life she desired.

When she decided in 1900 to become a schoolteacher, she enrolled in a pedagogical program in a convent in Gmünden, a small Austrian city, which had become her hometown, and by the end of 1901, she passed the examinations that would allow her to teach at public schools. However, her father prevented her from accepting a position as a teacher since it would have been beneath her social status to do something like this. For the next few years, she traveled with her father, learned different languages, encountered a young Russian woman who reinforced her socialist ideas, and studied bookbinding. Meanwhile, she had become desperate to separate from her family and to become independent. Consequently, in 1905, she decided to marry a German baron from Estonia, Viktor von Zur Mühlen, against her parents' will—they believed he was below her class. She herself was aware of the ideological differences with her future husband, as she noted in her memoir:

> Had the two of us searched the whole world over it would have been impossible for either of us to have found anyone less

> suited than we were to each other. There was nothing about which we did not have opposing opinions. My future husband related with pride and enthusiasm that he had spent most of his time in the previous two years shooting revolutionaries. I, on the other hand, dreamed of an estate run as a co-operative, in which all the workers had a share. Neither of us made a secret of our convictions, but the young Balt, accustomed to the submissive German women of his homeland, assumed that after the first two or three children my "madness" would automatically disappear, while I, for my part, was convinced that it would be an easy matter for me to "convert" him.[2]

For the next nine years, spent in isolation on a dismal feudal estate in northern Estonia, Hermynia Zur Mühlen learned a bitter lesson. All her attempts to change conditions on the estate failed; the intellectual climate among the Estonian aristocrats was neglible; the impoverished conditions among the peasants were overwhelming. Moreover, her own health suffered so much that she developed tuberculosis, and in 1913, she entered a health clinic in Davos, Switzerland, never to return to Estonia again.

During the six years that she spent in Davos, Zur Mühlen was unable to overcome the tuberculosis, which plagued her for the remainder of her life. However, she flourished as she came into contact with like-minded people who inspired her passion to change the world. The most significant was Stefan Klein, an Austrian translator, who had been raised in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He shared her political views and interests in literature, and they inspired one another. From this point onward, they became lifelong partners and often collaborated on different projects. Zur Mühlen was particularly excited by the outbreak of the 1917 Russian Revolution, and one of the first works that she translated was Leonid Nikolayev Andreev's *Das Joch des Krieges* (The Burden of War, 1918). She followed this with translations of Upton Sinclair's novels and articles and short stories against wars in various

newspapers and journals. At the same time, she began to reflect and write about the trivial and demeaning literature for girls and how children's literature played an important role in the socialization of young people. Numerous authors in Europe began to do this as well.

At the end of World War I, Zur Mühlen divorced her Estonian husband and moved with Klein to Frankfurt am Main, where they were to spend the next fourteen years, dedicated to "changing the world" through their writing. By this time, they were both members of the German Communist Party, and they played an active role in fostering the principles of the party through their translations of progressive authors, articles in journals and newspapers, stories, and novels. Up until the early 1930s, Russia was for Zur Mühlen the symbol of socialist hope, and her critique of injustice and exploitation of the working classes in Weimar Germany was based on her vision of revolutionary change in Russia and her ethical and idealist notions for transforming Germany. Given the poor living conditions, her fragile health, and lack of money while she was living in Frankfurt—Viktor Zur Mühlen kept her dowry after their divorce and she refused to ask her family for money—Zur Mühlen's accomplishments in this period of her life are remarkable.

Her first major pioneer effort was in the realm of fairy tales. In 1921, she published *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (*What Little Peter's Friends Tell Him*), which employed a frame narrative to include six different household objects telling young Peter stories, one after the other, that pertain to the difficult lives of working-class people. He has broken his leg and has to remain at home while his mother works in a factory. As in the tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Hans Christian Andersen, the objects come to life to explain their relationship to humans. Zur Mühlen was much more explicit in relating the objects to the exploitation of workers. This book was timely, given the difficult conditions of single women who had lost their husbands during World War I, the political conflicts in the early 1920s, the growing literacy of the lower classes,

and the support of left-wing publishing houses like the Malik Verlag. Consequently, the book became an immediate success and was translated into ten different languages. Zur Mühlen continued her experiments with politicizing the fairy tale by publishing several other books addressed to adults as well as children: *Märchen* (Fairy Tales, 1922); *Ali, der Teppichweber* (Ali, the Carpet Weaver, 1923); *Das Schloß der Wahrheit* (The Castle of Truth, 1924); *Der Muezzin* (1927); *Die Söhne der Aischa* (The Sons of Aiescha, 1927); *Said, der Träumer* (Said, the Dreamer, 1927); *Es war einmal . . . und es wird sein* (Once Upon a Time . . . It Will Be, 1930); and *Schmiede der Zukunft* (Forging the Future, 1933). The themes of all these fairy tales dealt with social injustice, discrimination, tyranny, deception, enlightenment, and the significance of solidarity among members of the working class.

Zur Mühlen was not alone in reinvigorating the fairy tale with a socialist bent in the interwar years of 1919–1939. In Germany, she was joined by Erich Kästner, Berta Lask, Lisa Tetzner, Bruno Schönlank, Oskar Maria Graf, Kurt Schwitters, and Edwin Hoernle, as well as the Hungarian Béla Balázs. There were hundreds of writers, illustrators, and publishers in Europe (including the UK) and North America who changed the "field" of children's literature as the rippling effect of World War I opened the way for socialist and communist cultural movements, seeking to change the socialization of children through political literature. Such books as Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo, and Mark Lipovetsky's *Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairy Tales* (2005), Mathilde Lévêque's *Le renouveau du roman et du récit pour la jeunesse en France et en Allemagne pendant l'entre-deux guerres* (2007), Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel's *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children's Literature* (2010), Kimberley Reynolds's *Left Out: The Forgotten Tradition of Radical Publishing for Children in Britain 1910–1949* (2016), Kimberley Reynolds, Jane Rosen, and Michael Rosen's *Reading & Rebellion: An Anthology of Radical Writing for Children 1900–1960*, and my *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days* (2018) reveal how widespread radical

children's literature was and how interconnected the publishers were through the publication of translations. In particular, Lévêque has shown how the works of Zur Mühlen and Lisa Tetzner were widely translated in France; Paul Valliant-Couturier's marvelous work *Jean sans pain* (*Johnny Breadless*, 1921) was not only translated but also adapted by Tetzner.

While Zur Mühlen, herself a superb translator of American left-wing authors, wrote political fairy tales, she also published a series of mystery novels under the pseudonym Lawrence Desberry. These popular books included *Die blaue Strahl* (The Blue Ray, 1922), *An den Ufern des Hudsons* (On the Bank of the Hudson River, 1925), and *Im Schatten des elektrischen Stuhls* (In the Shadow of the Electric Chair, 1929). Under the pseudonym Traugott Lehmann, Zur Mühlen published *Die weiße Pest: Ein Roman aus Deutschlands Gegenwart* (The White Plague: A Novel about the Present Situation in Germany, 1926). In all these novels, she raised questions about criminality, corruption, depravation, justice, law, and order. In other works, such as *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (Lina: A Story from the Life of a Servant, 1926) and *Nora hat eine famose Idee* (Nora Has a Great Idea, 1933), she explored how lower-class women were exploited, and how women in general had to struggle for better treatment. Though Zur Mühlen did not consider herself a feminist, there was no question in her mind that women should have equal rights with men, and her own life and writings were, to a certain degree, exemplary in this respect. As Lynda King has noted: "Before joining the K.P.D. (Communist Party) Zur Mühlen did not belong to a women's movement, and there is no evidence that she later was identified with any women's group, nor that she ever used any term equivalent to feminist to describe herself. First and foremost she was dedicated to the goals and principles of the socialist movement as she understood them. But one socialist principle stood high on her list of priorities: Women's position in society had to be changed. Her writing was a tool for increasing public awareness of the issues vital to women."[3]

Zur Mühlen's writing was always intended to motivate readers to take political action. As early as 1924, with the publication of her story "Schupomann Karl Müller" (Policeman Karl Müller), charges of high treason were brought against her for inciting political action against the police. The charges were dropped, but Zur Mühlen's name was registered by the police, and she and Klein were under surveillance during their time in Frankfurt. When the Nazi takeover of the government occurred in early 1933, they knew that their time of departure had arrived, and they left for Vienna in April of that year.

Once again, owing to financial difficulties, they moved several times and had limited opportunities to publish their writings. Zur Mühlen was well-known and the breadwinner, but even she had difficulties placing her stories or publishing the few novels she wrote during this time. These were mainly autobiographical in nature, yet politics always played a role in her work, as can be seen in two of her most important antifascist novels, *Ein Jahr im Schatten* (One Year in Shadows, 1935) and *Unsere Töchter, die Nazinen* (Our Daughters, the Nazis, 1935). During her hectic time in Vienna, where she could not depend on any assistance from her family—her parents were now dead—Zur Mühlen resigned from the Communist Party because of its authoritarian tendencies, which had become clear to her, especially in Russia, where Stalin had begun to initiate the terror trials. Zur Mühlen had always promoted liberty, equality, democratic choice, and solidarity as her socialist principles, and she realized that she could no longer work within the Communist Party to change it. Moreover, her project was always to improve the world.

In the meantime, her world kept changing when the Nazis invaded and occupied Austria in March of 1938. Zur Mühlen and Klein had to flee immediately, and this time they traveled to Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, where they had friends. Moreover, Klein had Czech citizenship, which entitled them to certain benefits. Later that year, they married so Zur Mühlen now had three passports—Austrian, Russian, and Czech—but barely a chance

to earn a living. No sooner did they make contacts and get settled in Bratislava than the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia; this time, Zur Mühlen and Klein fled to England, arriving there on June 19, 1939.

Soon after their arrival, they were interned in a location south of London under miserable conditions that badly affected Zur Mühlen's health. Once they were released in September, they eventually found a small place in Hertfordshire, just north of London, adequate enough for both to begin writing and translating again. This was to be their home until Zur Mühlen died in 1951.

Despite her weakened condition, Zur Mühlen threw herself into her work and published essays, fairy tales, novels, stories, and translations. She even did some radio work. However, her writing did not pay well, and she and Klein were dependent on the PEN Club and the Czech Refugee Trust Fund for financial aid. Since Zur Mühlen was fluent in English, as well as Russian and French, she published stories and articles for English-speaking readers, always with a strong antifascist tendency. Though she explored the possibility of returning to Austria at the end of the war, she abandoned this idea when she realized that her home country was not receptive to exile writers who had contested the Nazi regime even if they were no longer communists.

There was, indeed, a major change in Zur Mühlen's ideology during the 1930s and 1940s. Where she had formerly placed her faith in the Communist Party to spearhead the way to a socialist future, she now placed her faith in religion. Though Zur Mühlen was not a devout Catholic, her ethical and moral principles were strongly religious, and her later writing reflected a greater focus on spiritual belief than on communism. The ideological difference between *Little Allies: Fairy and Folk Tales of Fourteen Nations* (1945), a book written in English and largely neglected, and *What Little Peter's Friends Tell Him* could not be greater. Whereas her early narrative framework was conceived to address problems of the working class and faith in the solidarity of the oppressed, Zur Mühlen recast the narrative framework to allow her to stress how faith in God and mutual understanding are necessary for the

building of a new society that is not necessarily socialist. *Little Allies* is set near the end of World War II in a castle to which numerous refugee children from different countries are invited to spend a weekend. A twelve-year-old British boy named John and his two friends Czech Ján and Polish Jan are asked by John's mother to look after them and to entertain them while she attends a sick friend. At first, the children fight among one another, until the older boys come upon the idea that the children should tell stories about their home countries. They all agree, and Zur Mühlen then adapts fourteen tales from Denmark, Norway, Poland, Austria, France, and elsewhere to create a sense of international understanding and to strengthen the children's Christian faith in God. Not all the stories have a religious bent, but a tale such as "The Crown of the King of Domnonée," for example, reflects the general change in Zur Mühlen's ideological approach to socializing children and raising their social and political conscious. Based on the tale type "The Singing Bones," this story allegedly from Brittany concerns a good king who prays to God for help to save many of his people from rabies. A hermit by the name of Meen arrives, and after the king builds a monastery for him, the hermit magically cures the people. Later, this same hermit gives the king's youngest son, Judicael, a magic rod to find the crown that the king lost in battle, because this son reveres God. However, his two older brothers are malicious, and they kill Judicael to gain credit for finding the crown. Five years later, when the king hears flute music generated by the magic rod in a forest, he discovers Judicael's body and brings it to the monastery where the hermit prays to God so that Judicael is restored to life. The king wants to kill the brothers, but Judicael begs his father to forgive his brothers for their sin. In turn, they go out into the world to fight for God and the truth. Soon thereafter, the king dies and Judicael ascends the throne and maintains peace throughout his reign.

Clearly, Zur Mühlen's views about class struggle, solidarity of the working people, the causes of war, international conflict, and peace changed greatly toward the end of her life. Strangely, despite

their good morals, the tales in *Little Allies* contradict deeply held beliefs about the socialization of children, who were to become enlightened through communism. This does not mean that Zur Mühlen reneged and abandoned her struggle to improve the world. As Lionel Gossman remarks about her last years in England, "Overcoming the pessimism, despair, and sense of isolation that she projected convincingly on to several of her women characters, identifying with the oppressed, and taking an active stand against injustice remained the primary imperative of the lapsed Catholic as well as the former Communist. Not surprisingly, individual Communists remain, along with truly devout Christians, among the most decent and admirable characters in her fiction."[4]

In contrast to the classical fairy tales of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Andersen, Zur Mühlen's focus was constantly on the plight of the working class under capitalist conditions that had to be changed to create greater social justice. At the beginning of her career as a writer in Germany during the 1920s, she published her tales first in left-wing newspapers and magazines such as *Die rote Fahne* (The Red Flag) and *Der junge Genosse* (The Young Comrade). Her first book, *What Little Peter's Friends Tell Him,* was illustrated by George Grosz, one of the foremost experimental painters of that time. Though its six stories are intended to wake the political consciousness of children and are written in a simple, direct style to provide hope, Grosz's pointed and often bleak pen and ink drawings serve to remind readers that better times are not around the corner. Indeed, they capture the dark destinies of the protagonists in Zur Mühlen's tales.

Gossman perceptively notes that Zur Mühlen

> adapted a direct, unadorned prose style, reminiscent of the traditional tale, and relied on simple, antithetical moral and psychological categories to define her characters—greed and generosity, cruelty and kindness, haughtiness and modesty, hypocrisy and honesty, trickery and transparency. Inevitably this resulted in a considerable simplification of complex social and

economic processes and situations. Nevertheless, Zur Mühlen's fairy tales prescribe models of behavior radically opposed to those of traditional fairy tales, the basic lesson of which had been that all one's wishes will come true if one overcomes temptation and faithfully observes established norms of good conduct.[5]

Her most significant collection of tales, in my opinion, is *The Castle of Truth*, which has a strong autobiographical element. In the title tale, a beautiful young woman from the working class is exposed to the rays of truth from an indestructible castle, and consequently, she realizes how brutal the elite class is, and that she has made a mistake by marrying a wealthy baron. When she relates her experiences to his upper-class friends, who are like sinister beasts, she is sent to an insane asylum. However, the castle becomes a beacon of true light that exposes the criminality of the ruling class. Typical of all the tales in this collection is their open ending. Zur Mühlen did not believe in the happy ending of classical fairy tales. The endings of her tales were intended to provoke and incite readers to political action. In "The Glasses," for instance, readers are encouraged to rip off the glasses that blind them from the truth and deceive them. By using just their own eyes, they will follow in the footsteps of the people of the East (i.e., Russia) to rebel and to attain fair living conditions. In "The Servant," readers learn that they must share the means of production—that is, the machines—to serve the people and not just the ruling classes. In "The Carriage Horse," the workhorses organize a union to resist exploitation and bad living conditions. In "The Broom," a young worker by the name of Karl learns how to sweep away injustice with a magic broom, for injustice will keep happening unless one is actively involved in the struggle against tyranny. Zur Mühlen does not mince her words, nor does the illustrator Karl Holtz hold back from depicting the devastating conditions under which most people lived and suffered in the Weimar Republic.

Perhaps Zur Mühlen's most moving tale was published in her 1930 collection, *Once Upon a Time . . . It Will Be*. It is called "The

Red Flag," not because of its association with the Russian Revolution, but for the flag soaked in the blood of murdered refugees on an island ruled by a tyrant. It is this flag that unites different groups of exploited refugees who realize how much they have in common and who rebel against the tyrant and his lackeys. As Zur Mühlen writes: "Later, the former slaves, who became the masters of the factories and the island, succeeded in building a large ship and returned to their home countries. They carried the red flag and boldly planted it in all their homelands. Afterward a miracle occurred throughout all the countries—the people who rallied around the red flag were able to understand one another even when they spoke different languages, and they gradually merged and formed a powerful army with courage and determination that took up the battle against the exploitative and oppressive monsters of the world."[6]

This was a tale written when Zur Mühlen was losing faith in the Communist Party and when the rise of Nazism in Germany had become more than dangerous. Zur Mühlen did not rewrite or modernize traditional fairy tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Sleeping Beauty" to explain to her readers how to combat fascism. There are no princesses and princes or happy weddings in her tales. The sources for her stories were the injustices that she viewed throughout Europe and the courage of people deprived of humane living conditions. It is striking to see in her unusual fairy tales how much she valued international cooperation of working people as the basis for doing away with aristocracies and improving the world. Even in her very last fairy-tale book of 1945, *Little Allies*, her call for international understanding and unification still resonated, and the children from different countries are depicted as coming together to tell their stories—which were *her* hopeful stories.

10

Lisa Tetzner

THE NAIVE AND IDEALISTIC REVOLUTIONARY

The policeman questions Hans and his friend in New York. (Illustrator unknown.)

HISTORY DOES NOT ALWAYS tell the truth. It is filled with holes and gaps, and it is always difficult to determine the truth without critiquing standard "facts." Established truth is often misleading because it is part of the dominant establishment that claims to be

pure and fair. However, real history is a dialectical process that keeps correcting itself and exposes what poses to be the varnished truth. When World War I ended, historians and politicians began arguing about who caused this ungrounded war and why and how it was possible for another world war to commence. Many people in the world believed that the end of two world wars might mean the beginning of a new, more peaceful world. Lisa Tetzner was one of them. She was also one of thousands who thought that the time had come for women to take their destiny in their own hands and reveal the gaps in history that needed, and still need, to be filled with substantial truth.

Lisa Tetzner was born on November 10, 1894, in Zittau, a small city near Dresden on the border of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Her parents came from the wealthy upper bourgeois class. Her father was a politically conservative doctor; her mother conformed to the social patriarchal norms of her time and strongly believed that her daughter should be groomed to wed an appropriate young man from her class. However, the family plans for Tetzner changed when she turned eleven and was overcome by tuberculosis that caused a stiffening of her left leg and other medical problems that would hamper her for the rest of her life. Consequently, she spent a year in bed, learned to walk with a stroller and crutches, and finally walked on her own two feet.

Once she began to walk again, she attended school in Zittau and set her mind on living an independent life despite her disability and despite parents who sought to prohibit her education after she graduated from the German gymnasium. By the time she turned nineteen, she rebelled against her parents and moved to Berlin to study at the Social School for Young Ladies, where she led a much more independent life. However, she was very much affected by World War I and sought some way to ameliorate the lives of the common people in Germany.

Meeting with Eugen Diederichs in 1917 radically changed her life. Diederichs, a friend of the family, was a prominent publisher in Jena. Unlike Tetzner's parents, he was not only critical of the

politicians who had started World War I, but also supportive of young writers who were responding to the calamities they witnessed and were trying to bring about peace. At that time, Tetzner wanted to contribute to the restoration of the humanitarian values of the German people. Given her love of folklore, she decided to take speech lessons in Berlin and become a traveling storyteller in Thüringen, Swabia, and the Rhine. Her goal was to inspire young people and to seek peace and hope by telling the Grimms' tales—and tales from other countries. Despite her health difficulties, she did this from 1917 to 1921 and published articles detailing her experiences and the reactions of audiences in her first book, *Vom Märchenerählen im Volk* (About Storytelling with Fairy Tales among the Folk), in 1919.

In the first stage of her wandering and storytelling, Tetzner was clearly more naive and idealistic than political and didactic. Nevertheless, she had success because people felt that she was sincere and that she wanted foremost to awaken children to their humane cultural legacy through fabulous tales. Yet as she traveled and wrote about the poor, desperate conditions of the folk, she became exposed to the political upheavals in Germany and gradually understood how corrupt the German monarchy and elite groups were. It was during this time that she met her future husband, Kurt Kläber, a communist worker and writer, who had a profound influence throughout her life, though she herself never joined the Communist Party or believed in its ideology.

Unfortunately, in 1921, she was hindered by another infection in her legs and had to abandon her wandering for three years. During this time, she withdrew to a house that she and Kläber rented and then bought in Carona (Switzerland), where she wrote two more books about her storytelling and convalesced. While there, she made the acquaintance of numerous important writers, including Hermann Hesse and Lisa Wenger, as well as left-wing writers associated with Kläber, whom she married in 1924. As soon as she recovered from her illness, they returned to Berlin, where she continued to write children's stories with a political edge. Less naive

than she was in 1919, Tetzner saw a need to provide children with stories that addressed the contemporary conditions they faced during the Weimar period, when there were constant political uprisings, and later, during the Great Depression of 1929.

From 1927 until 1933, Tetzner became the director of the children's hour for the Berlin public radio station. She used this position to provide children with stories that might help them survive this bleak period in the Weimar Republic. At the same time, she contributed to the development of a proletarian children's literature in Germany. Here, her collaboration with the Hungarian writer Béla Balázs was indicative of a major change in her work. Together they wrote and produced the play *Hans Urian geht nach Brot* (Hans Urian Goes in Search of Bread, 1929), based on an old German poem, "Urians Reise um die Welt" (Urian's Journey around the World, 1786), by Matthias Claudius, and on the radical novella *Jean sans pain* (*Johnny Breadless*, 1921), by the French communist Paul Valliant-Couturier. The play, which concerned a working-class boy who travels with a fairy-tale rabbit around the world in search of bread for his mother, caused a great stir in Berlin when it premiered on November 13, 1929.

Some critics condemned it for being too didactic, while others were favorable in their reviews and recognized its original and forthright political approach that children could grasp. Indeed, it was the first significant proletarian play produced for children in Germany, and Tetzner followed it with her fairy-tale novel *Hans Urian: Die Geschichte einer Weltreise* (Hans Urian: The Story of a Journey around the World, 1931), which was even more provocative than the play because it portrayed Russia in a positive manner. With illustrations by the notable Bulgarian artist Bruno Fuk (pseudonym for Boris Angeluschev), Tetzner demonstrated how fantasy could be combined with realistic depictions of the difficult conditions in which children lived in many parts of the world. Although the book did comment favorably on the way children were treated better in Russia than in any other country, Tetzner was generally very critical of communist ideology and basically wanted

to critique the oppressive ways children were treated and exploited during the interwar years and the Great Depression. Moreover, the real "heroic" protagonist in this novel is the rabbit Trillewipp, who not only stands up for animal rights but also is severely critical of the warmongering countries.

From this point on in her career, Tetzner realized that she had to write more realistic fiction than fairy tales or fantasy to have the effect that she wanted on young and old readers. In 1933, however, when Hitler came to power, she was compelled to flee to Switzerland with Kläber to avoid the Nazis. Fortunately, Tetzner and Kläber were able to take refuge in their small house in Carona, and despite limitations set on them by the Swiss officials to monitor their activities, they remained politically active and helped many of their friends, such as Bertolt Brecht and Anna Seghers, whose lives were endangered by the Nazis. By this time, Kläber had resigned from the Communist Party because of Stalin's dictatorship and the show trials in Russia, and assumed the pseudonym Kurt Held so that he could write political stories for young people. Here he was helped by Tetzner, who proceeded to publish unusual antifascist and dramatic stories of children's struggles to overcome oppression, such as *Der Fußball* (Soccer, 1932), *Was am See geschah* (What Happened on the Sea, 1935), and *Die Reise nach Ostende* (The Trip to the East End, 1936), which were immediately banned in Germany. Since it was difficult to maintain ownership of their house in Carona, Tetzner took a job teaching courses in linguistics related to storytelling in a school in Basel from 1937 to 1955. In 1939, she and Kläber collaborated on the novel *Die schwarzen Brüder* (The Black Brothers), which was a grim depiction of how young boys were exploited as chimney-sweeps in Germany. It was followed by Kläber's important novella *Die rote Zora und ihre Bande* (Red Zora and Her Band, 1939), published under the name Kurt Held.

Well before World War II erupted in 1940, Tetzner, who continued to suffer from stiff legs and heart disease, began what she considered to be her major accomplishment as a writer for

children, *Erlebnisse und Abenteuer der Kinder aus Nr. 67: Odysee einer Jugend* (Experiences and Adventures of the Children in Tenement No. 67: The Odyssey of Young People), a series of nine books, published from 1933 to 1949. Set in a working-class tenement, these novels describe the destinies of a group of friends who experience the Nazi years, exile, war, and postwar times in Germany.

Both Tetzner and Kläber continued writing books for young readers after World War II, but they did not return to live in Germany. In fact, they refused to retain their German citizenship and became Swiss citizens. Still full of hope for a better world, Tetzner returned to publishing fairy tales such as *Su—Die Geschichte der sonderbaren zwölf Nächte* (Sue—The Story about the Strange Twelve Nights, 1950), *Wenn ich schön wäre* (If I Were Beautiful, 1956), and *Das Mädchen in der Glaskutsche* (The Girl in the Glass Coach, 1957). Upon her death in 1963, she was regarded as one of the eminent German writers of children's literature, and yet her most provocative novel, *Hans Urian*, has been underrated and neglected by most scholars of children's literature, just as Valliant-Couturier's *Johnny Breadless* has been.

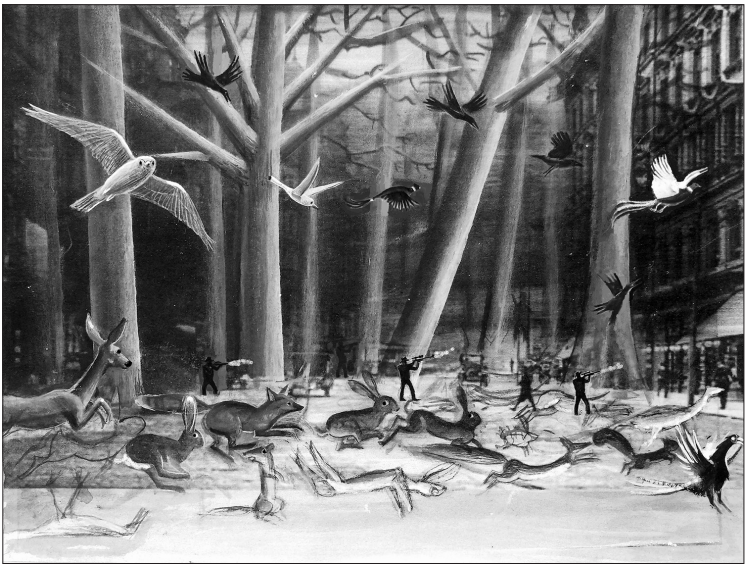
Why and how Tetzner decided to collaborate with Bálázs to write the play *Hans Urian Goes in Search of Bread* is unclear. What is clear, however, is that she was the one most familiar with the original German poem, likened to a folk song, and knew more about the name and meaning of Hans Urian. Ever since the seventeenth century, the name Mister Urian or Hans Urian has meant a *Tölpel* (fool) in German, someone who is pretentious and not highly regarded by other people. In the first important folk song about this character, "Urian's Journey around the World" (1786) by Matthias Claudius—he also wrote a second one, with the title "Urians Nachricht von der neuen Aufklärung" (Urian's News about the New Enlightenment)—Urian is a braggart and a liar. Goethe made use of the character in his famous play *Faust*; Beethoven set the poem to music. Tetzner perhaps also knew the long epic poem by Heinrich Jäde, *Der kleine Mann: Humoristische Fahrten durch alle Teile der Erde* (The Little Man: Humorous Trips

through All Parts of the Earth, 1855). Whatever the case may be, Tetzner would have been more familiar with this German folk character than the Hungarian Bálázs, and in her novel, Hans, the naive working-class protagonist, is a kind of idealistic fool who bumbles through the world. However, he is not stupid or boastful. Rather, he is a hard-working boy unfamiliar with conditions in the world who wants to help his family. Ironically, his guide or mentor is a fairy-tale rabbit who is more humane than humans. In this regard, Tetzner's novel is part of the German Bildungsroman tradition. Revolutionary in form and in its message, Tetzner's political work still speaks to us today in the name of human and animal rights and deep concern for the future of the world. Rarely has an author devoted herself so passionately to the welfare of children. Her book provides an unusual insight into the conditions of children following World War I and fills a gap in standard history, which is still trying to form a truthful and substantial portrayal of this period.

11

Born to Be Killed

BAMBI'S COURAGE AND FELIX SALTEN'S DILEMMA



The animals fear for their lives. (Illustration by Alenka Sottler.)

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN in a forest. It is the great leveler of social classes, gender, and ethnicity. Animals used to roam freely in the forest. They had constant conflicts, and killing was common, but most had a fighting chance to survive once they learned the laws of nature. They abided by these laws and lived freely, until humans intervened and set new laws. Under human laws, animals

no longer have the chance to live the lives they instinctively seek. They preserve themselves to be killed.

Animals are game.

What a strange way to define animals! Most dictionaries define "game" as wild animals hunted for sport or food or both. These dictionaries do not say who does the hunting or eating. It's a funny word, "game." As we all know, a game is also a contest involving competition and struggle. Most games have rules so that each side has a fair chance to win. This is what we call sport, but if hunting is a game, animals must play according to rules set only by their human opponents. It is clearly an unfair game. It is not a game.

Unfortunately, animals do not have a say in the games created by humans who love to have fun in the wild forests. Humans are smart and playful and have invented weapons that make their game of hunting easier. Humans gain a wonderful sense of power when they kill animals with these weapons, and some hunters display the heads of their prey on the walls of their dens and living rooms, after the game is eaten, if it is eaten. Many humans claim that it makes a difference if you eat the game. So, humans can be killers and humane at the same time.

Hunters can be compassionate.

They show compassion by eating only what they kill. Sometimes they do not kill all the animals they want to kill.

Felix Salten was a compassionate animal-rights advocate, and he once wrote: "When people finally wake up and realize either through the power of laws or the power of education that any cruel treatment of animals is a crime and any arbitrary killing of an animal is murder, then treacherous manslaughter and assassination will become more seldom. Then all the goals of our longing for peace will move considerably closer and within our reach. For the time being, anyone who expresses these sentiments will of course be regarded as an eccentric fool."[1]

Felix Salten was an eccentric fool.

In many ways, Salten understood animals better than the veterinarians of his day. As a Jew, he knew what it meant to be pursued

and killed. He knew how difficult it was to assimilate and play by the rules of a society that he and his forefathers had not created. And even when some Jews could set the rules, they did not do much better than their persecutors. This is what some historians call the perverse continuity of history.

A hunter and benefactor of animals, Felix Salten, born in Pest, Hungary, on September 6, 1869, was a living contradiction for most of his life. His given name was Siegmund Salzmann, and his father, Philipp, who came from a distinguished Jewish family, descended from several generations of rabbis. Salten's mother, Marie Singer, was also Jewish, and a talented actress until she married Salzmann and started having babies one after the other. Everyone in the large family spoke Hungarian and German, but German was their preferred language. Indeed, many European Jews at that time aspired to assimilate, which meant imitation and adoption of Austro-Hungarian norms and manners, and abandonment of their own religious ties. Instead of becoming a rabbi, Salten's father became an engineer, and in December 1869, soon after his son Siegmund was born, he moved the family to Vienna in search of a better life.

At first, the Salzmann family lived in a middle-class neighborhood in Vienna, and for six years, Philipp was a successful businessman. However, the 1873 stock market crash, combined with Philipp's inability to adjust to the fast pace of city life, compelled the family to move to a two-room apartment in the working-class district of Währing. From this point on, Felix Salten—who later changed his name from Siegmund Salzmann in his teenage years to "ummark" himself as Jew—had nothing but disdain for his father, whom he considered a dreamer. Along with his brothers, Salten was forced to find a job to help support the family. Despite their desperate situation, the six Salzmann brothers and one sister did their best to survive, each choosing a different entangled path.

For Salten, the path was certainly not straight. Once exposed to music, theater, and literature, he felt inclined to study and

develop his talents as a writer. The odds of his ever becoming a notable writer of any kind were against him, however. The family's poverty meant that he would not be able to attend a university, and even if he could have surmounted this financial obstacle, Jews in Währing were often treated as unwelcome immigrants. For Salten, this section of Vienna was like a wild jungle. He and his friends were often bullied by the other students at the so-called proletarian gymnasium. Moreover, the teachers tended to be anti-Semitic and mistreated Salten on many occasions. When he turned sixteen, he left the gymnasium and began working at an insurance agency, educating himself at the free library in his spare time. Writing and reading were his refuge.

During this time, his sister, Katherine, died of tuberculosis, and the family's funds became so depleted that they had to move from their small apartment to rooms in cheap hotels. Salten's desire to rise above his family's poverty drove him to pursue the arts and the Bohemian life as an escape from the drudgery of his "home." Whenever he could, he went to the theater, attended exhibits at museums, and sought out places where he might meet people of culture and wealth. Young Salten became an ambitious and shrewd social climber.

The year 1890 was monumental for Salten, who had begun writing poetry and short stories while working at the insurance agency. Two of his poems were published in the magazine *An der schönen blauen Donau* (On the Beautiful Blue Danube) as was a short story, "Der Vagabund, eine Hundegeschichte" (The Vagabond, a Dog's Story). This narrative was the first of Salten's numerous animal tales and reflected his great love for dogs. Throughout his life, he owned dogs of different breeds, and in 1890, he had already begun writing *Der Hund von Florenz* (The Hound of Florence), a novel with clear parallels to *Bambi*, which he published in 1923. More important than dogs, however, was his meeting with the famous dramatist and writer Arthur Schnitzler, who invited Salten to the Café Griensteidl, where some of the best writers of the Young Vienna (*Jung-Wien*) group gathered to discuss literature,

art, theater, and politics. Among them were Peter Altenberg, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Hermann Bahr, Jakob Wassermann, and Karl Kraus. Most of these writers were well-to-do middle-class assimilated Jews, who contributed innovative literary works to Austrian culture up through World War I. For Salten, Café Griensteidl was a kind of university, and he spent as much time as he could there as an "apprentice" in Viennese culture until 1897, when the café was demolished. The talented Salten, although much lower on the social ladder than his mentors, was a quick learner and began publishing a book a year as well as reviews, articles, and essays in different newspapers and magazines. Though Karl Kraus, who left the group in 1896, found Salten uncouth, Salten managed to become the theater editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* (Viennese Daily Newspaper) by 1894.

Salten rose rapidly in Viennese social and cultural circles. He was not afraid to write about any subject in the world. In addition to reporting about art and plays, he wrote about scandals and made friends with various members of the Viennese nobility. In fact, he often served as a middleman to help wealthy "friends" from embarrassment because of their extramarital affairs, which at that time were legion. Even Salten had numerous messy relationships with women. Having long since moved from his parents' apartment, he spent money as fast as he earned it and assumed the manners of his upper-class "mentors." In 1902, he married Ottilie Metzel, an actress at the famous Burg Theater, and they had two children, Paul (b. 1903) and Anna (b. 1904). Salten's new family responsibilities compelled him to work harder and pay back debts. Though considered one of the finest journalists in Vienna, he could not stop himself from seeking more fame. Nor did he stop having affairs and serving as a go-between for his friends and their mistresses. At one point, he founded a literary cabaret, which failed, and he sometimes wrote popular novels. This was a period when romances with erotic touches had become popular, and Salten, who used several different pseudonyms, was always willing to explore other genres and fields if he could earn money from

them. He liked the high life but was also a very generous man who helped many of his relatives financially. It is clear that Salten was constantly driven to prove himself. As Beverley Driver Eddy points out in her superb biography, *Felix Salten: Man of Many Faces*:

> It took Salten many years to realize that his "dog" life of labor had always kept him from being a fully accepted member of the Young Vienna circle—that in the minds of his friends he was merely a working journalist and not an artist of their caliber. . . . In the many years that had transpired since those heady days at the Griensteidl, Salten had come to view himself as someone who furthered the careers of his friends through his work as a newspaper critic without getting the complete support from them that he felt he was due.[2]

At the same time that Salten was learning to live the life of a man-about-town, he was also rediscovering his Jewish identity. Salten's family was not religious, and at one point, he even flirted with converting to Catholicism. Anti-Semitism was on the rise in Europe, however, and made him rethink his relationship to Judaism. In particular, Salten had been strongly influenced by Theodor Herzl's pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State, 1896), and he was one of the few members of Young Vienna who supported Herzl's Zionist cause because it somehow made him proud to be Jewish. He had experienced anti-Semitism firsthand during his youth, and Herzl was a symbol of resistance. Salten wrote numerous articles about Jews and anti-Semitism for the *Zeit* and also for Herzl's weekly, *Die Welt.* In 1909, he traveled to Galicia and Bukovina. Later, he made his way to Palestine in an effort to understand how Jews were managing to live in troubled times and trying to realize Herzl's dream of a Jewish state.

As usual, his attitudes were contradictory. When World War I erupted in July of 1914, he was passionately on the side of Austria and Germany. As a Jew, Salten felt he had to demonstrate that he was 100 percent Austrian, and his patriotism was extreme—that is, until 1917, when he realized that the war was a catastrophe for

the Austrian people. Just as he had enthusiastically supported the aristocrats of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he quickly changed his tune and began to endorse left-wing movements while maintaining good contacts with the ruling elite. Though Lenin and Trotsky became his heroes, his support for socialism was meager, largely due to the fact that he shunned violence and lacked enough of a command of political theory and history to grasp the complexities of the politics at that time.

Nevertheless, Salten felt competent enough to make statements about Jews, war, and the murderous nobilty through his writing. Two of his most significant works appeared in this critical historical period: *Bambi, eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Wald* (Bambi, a Story of Life in the Forest) and *Der Hund von Florenz*. Ever since childhood, Salten had loved to spend time in the Viennese woods, and later in forests in Switzerland and other Central European countries. When he became wealthy, he and his family spent summers renting cottages in or near forests. Salten saw something meaningful in the way the forest animals faced inequality and murder, and he responded to nature's call of freedom. His daughter, Anna, described his reverent attachment to animals this way:

> When later he owned his own hunting preserve, he would wander about it night and day. His deep understanding of Nature and his almost religious veneration of her marvels received added impulse, and his knowledge of animal life broadened still more. Only very rarely did he fire a shot—and then only when the principles of gamekeeping demanded it. This preserve was Father's most beloved place. In a way it was his home. . . . The immortal *Bambi* owes its existence to my father's thorough familiarity with and his great love of that woodland, as do all of Bambi's companions, big and small, which have come to life in Felix Salten's stories.[3]

Clearly, Salten longed to be close to animals, whom he regarded as pure, honest, and decent creatures, unlike the people of the Viennese society in which he lived and worked. To a certain extent,

his forays in the forests resembled strange, paradoxical religious rituals in which he could cleanse himself of sin and then enjoy communion by killing the creatures he loved. In writing *Bambi*, despite his own contradictions, he hoped to reveal that nature was not a paradise, and that only when people truly understood how animals suffered persecution from hunting in the forest could humans create peace among themselves.

Serialized in the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1921 and published as a book in 1923, *Bambi* was a huge, unexpected success. From 1923 until his death in 1945, Salten wrote several other important animal stories and novels, hoping for even more fame. The most significant were *Der Hund von Florenz*, *Fünfzehn Hasen* (Fifteen Rabbits, 1929), *Gute Gesellschaft: Erlebnisse mit Tieren* (Good Society: Experiences with Animals, 1930), *Freunde aus aller Welt: Roman eines zoologischen Gartens* (Friends from All Over the World: A Novel about a Zoo, 1931), *Florian: Das Pferd des Kaisers* (Florian: The Emperor's Horse, 1933), *Die Jugend des Eichörnchens Perri* (The Youth of the Little Squirrel Perri, 1938), *Renni der Retter: Das Leben eines Kriegshundes* (Renni the Rescuer: The Life of a Dog on the Battlefield, 1941), *Bambis Kinder: Eine Familie im Wald* (Bambi's Children: A Family in the Forest, 1940), and *Djibi das Kätchen* (Jibbi the Kitten, 1945).

Perhaps the two most notable books during the 1920s, which served as book ends for *Bambi*, were *The Hound of Florence* and *Fifteen Rabbits*. These works display Salten's deep existentialist concern not only for powerless animals but also for people born on the wrong side of the tracks. His identification with animals could not have been more apparent than in *The Hound of Florence*, in which a desperate young man named Lucas Grassi seeks to leave Vienna and become an artist in Florence. However, he wishes for too much, and is turned into a dog for part of the day and a human for the other. At first, it seems that the talented Lucas will manage a double life, and that the novel will take the shape of a Bildungsroman. However, Lucas falls in love with a prostitute named Claudia, and as a dog, he tries to protect her from an

upper-class predator. Then, just as he is about to transform into a human and cast off the magic spell that has made him into a dog, he is killed by a duke. Indeed, his life as a man—and the novel is filled with many autobiographical references—is worth no more than a miserable dog's life.

In *Fifteen Rabbits,* first published serially, like *Bambi,* in the *Freie Presse,* Salten went a step further in depicting the lives of animals as brutal and dangerous. From the very beginning of this novel, a mother rabbit explains to her son that he must always, always be careful where he goes in the woods, and that even his own father might kill him. Indeed, the book contains numerous scenes of killings committed by other animals and human hunters. It also seems clear that Salten had the fate of Jews in mind when some of the rabbits speak in a Jewish dialect. Despite the fact that the major animal protagonist in this novel survives, he will not lead a happy life. Nor would Salten, for his writing did not bring him much joy. Indeed, he allegorically expressed a dark vision of the world through his animal stories.

It would seem that Salten was consumed with his writing about animals after 1923, but this was not the case. He continued writing articles and books about many other subjects, from popular romances to books about the Jewish homeland, America, and European politics. He also traveled to the United States and Palestine. Though he regarded himself as an admirer of Marx and Trotsky, Salten remained loyal to the Austrian nobility. In 1927, he replaced his good friend Arthur Schnitzler as president of the Austrian PEN Club and sought to minimize the threat of fascism in Europe. Politics was never his strong suit, however, and he resigned by 1933, unable to cope with the rise of the Nazis or the critique he received from left-wing intellectuals. Yet he had to make money to pay the debts incurred by his high living, and he more or less ignored the perils of fascism by working on sound films, animal stories, and small pieces for the theater. His fame protected him.

One of the reasons Salten had become "world" famous and was chosen to succeed Schnitzler was the translation of *Bambi* into

English in 1928 by the American Whittaker Chambers (who was later revealed to be a communist spy). Chambers's understanding of Austrian German was mediocre at best; indeed, his translation is filled with all sorts of errors and fails to capture Salten's unusual Viennese style of writing and anthropomorphism. Yet the review in the *New York Times* and other newspapers and the selection of *Bambi* by the Book of the Month Club lent the translation a legitimacy and authenticity that it did not deserve. As Sabine Strümper-Krobb points out in her astute essay with the intriguing title "'I Particularly Recommend It to Sportsmen,' Bambi in America: The Rewriting of Felix Salten's *Bambi,"*

> the English translation actually tones down Salten's anthropomorphism in places and changes its focus in others, thus opening the possibility for the story to be understood less as a human story about persecution, expulsion or assimilation and more as an animal story conveying a strong message about the protection of animals and the necessity of conservation. At the same time, while emphasizing the central universal message of the vulnerability of all life, animal or human, the slight shift in the way which Chambers deals with Salten's anthropomorphism reduces the transcendental dimension that the original novel contains.[4]

Salten did not care or understand whether his bestselling novel was competently translated. He was simply pleased that it brought him fame, which would give him the means to escape the Nazis in 1938, when Austria was supposedly "annexed" by Hitler. (One really cannot speak about annexation when the Nazis were warmly greeted by most of the Austrians.) Salten, like many European Jews, found it incredible that he would have to leave Austria when he felt more Austrian than the common Austrian. Even when the Nazis banned Salten's books in 1935 and it became clear that they would soon be marching into Vienna, Salten continued to support Austria's right-wing, authoritarian government. Ultimately, he had to come to terms with his situation and used his connections

among the Austrian nobility and officials to obtain a permit to live in neutral Switzerland, where his only daughter, Anna, a well-known actress, had made her home.

When the Swiss government granted Salten and his wife permission to live in Zurich, one condition was that he would cease all activity as a journalist. He was permitted to write only books, mainly animal stories, and he was not allowed to be active in cultural politics. Since he had sold the cinema rights for *Bambi* to the American director Sidney Franklin in 1933 for a mere $1,000, and since Franklin transferred the rights to the Disney Studios, Salten did not gain much from the success of the animated classic *Bambi*. Here and there, thanks to other contracts for his animal stories and the support of his daughter, Salten was able to live comfortably until his death in 1945. By this time, Salten had lost all sense of what was happening in the world. He was in a world of his own.

Although Salten may have grasped that Walt Disney had radically changed his novel when he watched the animated film in 1942 in Zurich, where he was applauded by the audience, he had no idea that his name would gradually become disassociated, if not erased, from *Bambi*. Nor was he aware that the Disney Studios would earn millions, if not billions, of dollars by developing a monopoly on anything labeled *Bambi*. Most people in the world today think that Disney created Bambi, and that the Disney Studios deserve all the credit for the production of one of the most sentimental films ever made about animal rights.

In his informative and persuasive essay "The Trouble with Bambi: Walt Disney's *Bambi* and the American Vision of Nature," Ralph Lutts notes:

> *Bambi*'s touted authenticity is severely limited. The film is faithful to visual, artistic accuracy in the general appearance and movements of many of its animals, not to a scientific or ecological accuracy. Even the visual accuracy is compromised for the sake of cuteness: for example, the more traditional cartoony cuteness of Thumper and Flower, and the tail hanging opossums.

> In short, despite their efforts to be accurate, Salten's original version of *Bambi* underwent a transformation as Disney and his staff reshaped it to fit a different medium, their own sensibilities, and a mass market. In the process much of Salten's ecological and moral subtlety were winnowed away. . . . The image of cuteness has become so popular that even adult deer are sometimes mistakenly shown with spots. Disney, however, had a well-tested technique for carrying cuteness to an extreme.[5]

This is a shame, for Salten's novel is a brilliant and profound study of how minority groups throughout the world have been brutally treated, murdered even, when they try to live peacefully in their own environment. Read in the original language and in its sociohistorical context, *Bambi* reveals the cutthroat manner in which powerless people are hunted and persecuted for sport. Salten was able to capture this existential quandary through a compassionate yet objective lens and innovative writing technique that few writers have ever been able to achieve.

It is important to note that Salten was not immune to anti-Semitism. He wrote his novel during one of the worst periods of anti-Semitism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when more than 1,500 Jews were massacred in Ukrainian pogroms from 1918 to 1921.[6] As David Edmonds points out:

> Anti-Semitism was a protean beast, and Viennese Jews found no successful strategy to dodge it. When something went wrong, the Jews were always to blame. Defeat in battle? Blame the Jews. Inflation? The fault of the Jews.Abhor modernism? It originated with the Jews. . . . There was a rich tapestry of stereotypes: the war profiteer, the grappling capitalist, the scheming puppeteer, the subversive communist, the fawning subordinate, the oily scrounger, the lascivious decadent. The wealthier Jews (money Jews) were loathed for their power. The professionals and intellectuals were detested for their influence. The Jews from the East (beggar Jews) were despised for their poverty and exotic difference. At the end of World War I, there were severe

shortages of both food and fuel, and the new refugees were held culpable for exacerbating the hardship. In the Austrian Hinterland, outside Vienna, where there were far fewer Jews, anti-Semitism was stronger still.[7]

In 1923, the same year that *Bambi* was published as a book, Hugo Bettauer, a prominent Jewish journalist, published a satirical novel with the title *The City without Jews* (*Die Stadt ohne Juden)*. Within two years, the book sold over a quarter million copies. The narrative, also made into a film, demonstrates that once the Jews are totally banished from Vienna by a tyrant, the Christian Viennese cannot survive without them and, consequently, must invite the Jews to return. In March of 1925, Bettauer was murdered by a Nazi Party follower on account of Bettauer's opposition to anti-Semitism and portrayal of Christian Viennese. His murderer was never sent to prison. Vienna was arguably the most race conscious city in Europe.

Due to Salten's extraordinary empathetic composition, *Bambi* can be read on several levels as a German Bildungsroman or novel of education, an existentialist autobiography, and a response to anti-Semitism. Taken critically and seriously, Salten's novel exposes the Disney *Bambi* as a shallow, sentimental film that has nothing to offer spectators, even animal-rights sympathizers. Disney and his collaborators dumbed down the novel, added some ridiculous glee-club music, and shifted the emphasis of the narrative to glorify elitism. But I do not want to spend time comparing the novel and the sterile animated film. In fact, this has been done by various astute scholars.[8] More important, I believe, is a focus on the multiple levels of the story that reveal just how relevant Salten's novel still is.

Though we have no proof that Salten ever read Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister* (1795–96), it is more than likely that he was familiar with it or with other classical German Bildungsromane. Goethe's novel, translated into English at the beginning of the nineteenth century, became and

remains the model for numerous other "coming of age" stories throughout the western world. The basic plot outline concerns a young boy, who has some kind of traumatic experience that causes him to leave his home and family. This separation ignites a quest to find himself, and the boy is often guided by a fatherly figure or unknown forces that enable him to take command of or master his life. Hence, the name Meister. Without a wise counselor, Wilhelm could not have succeeded in mastering the difficult conditions in a world often depicted as brutal or indifferent. In Bambi's case, the loss of his mother leaves him at the mercy of invisible and inhumane hunters, and were it not for the old Prince, who teaches him to survive in a cutthroat world, Bambi probably would not have survived life in the forest. Yet even when Bambi does learn how to avoid death and destruction, he is not a happy roebuck at the end of the novel. If anything, Bambi has simply learned to live alone. Unlike the inane Disney film, Bambi does not wed Faline, have twins, and live happily ever after. Instead, he is destined to lead a lonely life of survival.

Salten purposely uses the frame of the Bildungsroman to disappoint readers' expectations. He is very honest with himself in this narrative, which is filled with references to his own experiences as a young man, particularly as a Viennese Jew at the beginning of the twentieth century. Bambi is indeed Salten, and Salten is Bambi. The name Bambi, based on the Italian word *bambino*, or child, is Salten's way of designating the newborn fawn as a common animal without exceptional status. Bambi is an everyman, just as Salten was an ordinary Austro-Hungarian Jew. The reader is never certain whether Bambi is the old Prince's son. The old Prince "adopts" him, but he might have done this with other young bucks in the forest before Bambi was born. For most of the story, Bambi is on his own: he must learn how to survive in the forest by himself, with some help every now and then from the old Prince. Part of Bambi's youth involves self-education, the way that Salten himself withdrew from his family and managed to overcome obstacles in Währing, the proletarian neighborhood of his youth, where he

was often persecuted just for being Jewish. Just as Bambi becomes an intrepid roebuck, Salten rose to fame and then was belittled and alienated from Austrian and German culture. He was treated just like all the other European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s.

There is no doubt that Bambi is Salten's alter ego, and that Salten's novel is an autobiographical work written to reflect upon the meaning of life and the persecution of Jews and other minority groups in Europe. Perhaps the key to understanding this association is the sudden insertion of the conversation between two leaves in chapter 7:

"It's no longer like the old days," one leaf said to the other.

"You're right," responded the other leaf. "So many have fallen this evening that we're almost the only ones left on our branch."

"No one knows who is going to go next," the first leaf said. "When it was still warm, and the sun still provided heat, a storm came or a cloudburst, and many of us were already torn off then, even if they were still young. You never know whose turn will come next."

"The sun rarely shines now," the second leaf sighed, "and even when it shines, it doesn't strengthen us. We need to renew our strength."

"Do you think it's true," the first leaf asked, "do you really think it's true that other leaves come and replace us, when we're gone, and then others come and even others after them?"

"It's certainly true," the second leaf whispered. "Our minds are too small to think about this. It's beyond us."

"Plus, it's all too sad if you think about it too much," the first leaf added.

They were silent for a while. Then the first leaf said quietly to himself, "Why must we go away?"

"What happens to us when we fall from the tree?" the second asked.

"We sink down."

"What's lying down there?"

The first leave answered: "I don't know. Some say one thing, some say something else. Nobody knows."

The second leaf asked again: "Do we still feel anything, do we know anything more about ourselves when we are down there?"

The first leaf responded: "Who knows? None of those who have fallen down there have ever returned to tell us about it."

There is something eerie about this chapter, as if it were a premonition of the Holocaust, as if it were impossible for Jews and other minority people to determine their own destiny. Are the animals in Salten's forest members of different minority groups, all born to be killed? Do the invisible white hunters symbolize the intricate socioeconomic systems and forces in Europe that subtly determine the rules of assimilation? Must outsiders always remain outsiders?

Of course, some groups of animals suffer more than others, and here we come to the theme of animal rights and one of the major contradictions of Salten's life. Perhaps the best analysis of Salten's deep animal love—he always had dogs and other pets in his life—is Dietmar Grieser's essay "Ausgebootet" in *Im Tiergarten der Weltliteratur*.[9] Grieser notes that when Salten wrote *Bambi* while spending the summer in a large, expensive mountain cottage that he rented every summer, he literally breathed in the natural world that he described so intimately in his novel, and he also did his customary hunting. His intimacy with the animals in the forest did not prevent him from hunting and killing them as he was soon to be hunted. Challenged by various critics about his contradictory relationship with animals, Salten replied: "The animal cannot lie. Its unconditional decency has a disarming effect just as its innocence does. Whether the animal is of the kind that belongs to those that murder or those who are murdered, it is always innocent, always decent. Never sentimental."[10]

In the final analysis, Salten believed that all humans should become more like animals. If they did, they would paradoxically become truly humane, and violent acts would gradually diminish.

In chapter 23, right before a dog tears apart a wounded fox, Salten states his case:

> There were hissings, peeps, and shrill cries from all the trees and bushes while overhead the crows cawed, "Henchman! Henchman!"
>
> Everyone had rushed to the spot, and from the trees or from safe hiding places on the ground, they watched the fight. The outburst that had burst from the fox released an embittered indignation in all of them. And the blood that spilled on the snow and steamed before their eyes made them so furious that they forgot all their fears.
>
> The dog glanced around him. "You!" he cried. "What do you want? What do you know about it? What are you talking about? Everyone belongs to Him [the hunter] just as I do. But I, I love Him. I worship Him. I serve Him. You want to rebel. . . . You pathetic creatures, you want to rebel against Him? He's all powerful. He's above us. Everything you have comes from Him. Everything we have comes from Him. Everything that lives or grows comes from Him."
>
> The dog was so elated that he shook.
>
> "Traitor!" the squirrel cried shrilly.
>
> "Yes, traitor!" the fox hissed. "You're nothing but a traitor! You, and only you!"
>
> The dog was dancing about in a holy frenzy. "Only me?" he cried. "You liar! Aren't there many, many others on His side? Horses, cows, sheep, chickens. Many, many of you and your kind are on His side and worship Him and serve Him."
>
> "They're rabble!" snarled the fox, full of a boundless contempt.
>
> At that point, the dog could no longer contain himself and attacked the fox's throat. Growling, spitting, and panting, they rolled in the snow, a wriggling and gasping bundle. Their fur flew into the air. The snow rose like dust, splattered with fine

> drops of blood. But the fox could not fight any more. In only a few seconds, he was lying on his back, his white belly exposed. He twitched, stiffened, and died.[11]

Bambi does not make a rational or strong case for animal rights. It is not at all didactic. Salten simply wanted to describe life in the forest as it was. What is an animal to do if the human species has all the power and the animals none? Some sort of compromise has to be developed, and only humans can truly resolve the dilemma—that is, only humans can stop the killing of animals and killing each other in wars. Salten seems to say in this novel that animals who don't want to be killed have no choice but to become loners. Yet the truth of the matter is that Salten, who tried to assimilate and become at one with his killers, had to abandon his compromise position and seek refuge in a neutral country, where he died, very much a forgotten loner.

12

Emery Kelen, the "Violent" Pacifist

The courageous Yussuf the Ostrich. (Illustration by Emery Kelen.)

VERY EARLY IN HIS LIFE, Emery Kelen learned to use his pen instead of a gun to fight for freedom and peace. Born in 1896 to a Jewish family in the small city of Győr, Hungary, he attended art school in Vienna as a teenager. However, when World War I

erupted in 1914, he was drafted to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army. His experiences during the war were gruesome and included typhus and assorted injuries. Eventually, he became so desperate to escape the battlefield that he pretended to be insane. In 1918, the military sent him to the Klosterka mental hospital in Hungary, where he began to apply his artistic skills again and drew portraits of unusual patients. This artwork enabled him to recover from the insanity of the war. Indeed, he asked himself if he was insane for not having gone insane during those terrible times.

As his wife, Betty, remarked in her memoir:

> This asylum, the Klosterka, was his original school of art when he observed how blatantly mental patterns were reflected in the face and body of the patients. "There is no art," wrote Shakespeare, "to find the mind's construction in the face." This was Kelen's credo, and he became a life-long student of constitutional psychology. It was his conviction that whatever scientists, such as Kretschmer and Sheldon,[1] could observe about a personality on the body, was reflected also in the face. "The face," he believed, "is a short-hand of the personality."[2]

As soon as the war ended, Kelen declared himself to be a "violent pacifist" and fought for international peace for the rest of his life through his art. After briefly taking part in the Hungarian communist revolution in Budapest, he returned to his hometown, Győr, where he experienced difficulties because of his portraits of right-wing town notables and communists, who had taken charge of the city. When the counterrevolution succeeded, Kelen decided to finish his art studies, first in Paris and then at the famous Hans Hofmann art studio in Munich. While in Munich, he worked as a sports cartoonist for the German magazine *Fussball*. By 1922, he decided to move to Lausanne, Switzerland, to continue his career in sports illustration. However, his interests in history and contemporary political developments led him down a different professional path.

While in Lausanne, he began to spend more time doing freelance artwork about current events and politics. By chance, he met

fellow Jewish Hungarian artist Alois Derso (1888–1964) in a bar, and they decided to join forces and use their skills as political caricaturists to expose the contradictions of those men who claimed they were fighting for peace but in fact contributed to war. The two formed a notable artistic partnership, Derso & Kelen, which lasted for over thirty years. They became renowned for their ironic portrayals of current events and satirical caricatures of famous diplomats and politicians. Since photographers were not often allowed in conference rooms at the time, leading newspapers and magazines throughout Europe eagerly sought Derso & Kelen's renderings. Betty Kelen notes:

> They invented a form of pictorial journalism, in which they covered in panoramic drawings the important issues of the day: reparations, disarmament, and the ravages of economic and social life left behind by the war. The drawings were reproduced in lithography and included in limited edition albums, which were bought by collectors and libraries. The originals were often acquired by governments to hang in government buildings. Loose-leafs could be bought at the newsstands of Geneva and gift shops. In their work both artists were totally committed to the principles of the League Covenant and to the new, daring form of diplomacy brought into the world by Woodrow Wilson: "Open covenants, openly arrived at."[3]

Derso and Kelen attended almost every significant European political conference during the 1920s and 1930s and held two exhibits of their works, in Geneva (home to the League of Nations) and London. By the 1930s, their fame was so widespread that high-profile institutions steadily commissioned them to attend political meetings and report the events through their caricatures. Their criticism of Hitler's rise to power led Nazis and other fascist groups to threaten them. In December of 1938, Derso and Kelen fled to New York City, with the help of many American friends.

Almost immediately upon arrival in New York, Derso and Kelen began to provide magazines and newspapers such as *Esquire*, *KEN*,

the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Times Magazine, Fortune*, and the *Washington Post* with political illustrations. Their critique of fascism and exposure of the contradictions in the decisions made by diplomats in the name of peace typified their work. However, cracks in Derso and Kelen's relationship began to show during the 1940s, when Kelen became more independent and liberal and published three unique children's books: *Yussuf the Ostrich* (1943); *Aesop's Fables*, written by Betty Stones, whom he had married in 1940; and *Calling Dr. Owl* (1945). By the late 1940s, Betty began to play a more important role as Kelen's partner. Derso and Kelen agreed to separate and concentrate on their own individual projects. Despite political disagreements, they remained lifelong friends.

In 1948, the United Nations Office of Public Information hired Kelen as a television director and producer, a position he held until 1956. At the same time, he occasionally taught art courses at New York University and published several books combining his unique animal illustrations with pithy comments about political events and politicians. Among his best works are *Platypus at Large* (1960), *Peace in Their Time* (1963), *The Political Platypus* (1966), *Hammarskjöld, the Political Man* (1968), *Fifty Voices of the Twentieth Century* (1970), and *Mr. Nonsense: A Life of Edward Lear* (1973).

In the synopsis of a book Kelen was planning to write before his death in 1978, he wrote: "The years since World War I have brought to the forefront of public affairs ever more ferocious men. They are angry, loud, and coarse, and they exude a sense of power: but they have not, and cannot be more successful in building an orderly world than the elegant 'ruling class' they replaced. We are living in a revolutionary age, but revolutions have little to do with the ideals for which they are fought. Furthermore, all revolutions (and I have lived through five of them) are made by men of the same spiritual mold. I wish to write in detail about the revolutionary 'type.'"[4]

Kelen also described the revolutionary type as a muscleman, and often vented his anger by drawing this type. In his autobiographical

book, *Peace in Their Time*, he wrote a revealing description that captures the personality of authoritarians and other tyrants worldwide:

> There's no doubt in my mind that it is the International Muscleman who always finds good reasons for starting—in the words of Frederick the Great—a "crisp and joyous war." It is this fellow we must examine to find out what primitive impulses underpin his reasoning, because it is here, in the temperament of the Muscleman, that we find the germ of war.
>
> By nature the Muscleman is predatory, self-righteous, self-centered. Convinced of his superiority, he is incapable of self-criticism. Insight and reflection do not delay his actions, and in an adverse situation the first thing that comes into his mind is to solve the problem by force. His intellect and impulses form a solid block. If he changes his mind, he reverses himself totally, with epileptic suddenness.
>
> He seeks the friendship of others of his kind, but he often turns on his cronies. He can harbor vengeance for a long time. His cunning is that of the tiger: a prelude to violence. He forgives himself any excess of violence because he believes himself to be an instrument of providence. A mystic fog envelops his brain.[5]

Almost all of the caricatures Kelen completed with Derso were profound critiques of musclemen, injustice, and fascist tendencies among politicians. After he arrived in New York, Kelen began employing animals as allegorical figures that reflected the behavior of human types he had encountered and studied in Europe. Many of the types were representative of the bureaucrats he met in his work at the League of Nations and later at the United Nations. In her memoir, Betty remarked: "Kelen was a remarkable animal caricaturist. His hero was Grandville, an artist of the 19th century with the same funny-bone. It is my opinion that anyone who looks well at a Kelen animal caricature will never look at that animal in the same way again."[6]

For instance, after reading and viewing the types of people and animals in *Yussuf the Ostrich*, his first major work of animals in the 1940s, readers, I believe, will find it impossible to view ostriches the way they did previously. Yussuf is likened to a smart, ethical, and brave young boy who fights for peace. The Nazi general is depicted as a muscleman, and the two dachshunds wearing Nazi emblems are deceptive, for they hate the Nazi bullies and bring a sense of humor to the tale. Kelen's narrative is not didactic. The ironic humor—dachshunds as rebels, Yussuf learning at school and winning races, talking animals—is clear: Kelen mocks the war seriously because he knew all about it. His experiences in Europe led him to become a devoted "violent artist" of peace, and with *Yussuf,* he sought to reach children (and adults) with a message that remains relevant today.

Kelen became a master of fables with *Yussuf*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Calling Dr. Owl*, but World War II and the Cold War led him to become more politically assertive in his fables. In a letter he wrote to a close friend named Pasha after the first atomic bomb exploded in 1945, he observed: "Bombs don't make war, and they don't make peace; it is *man* who makes them. It is a dangerous delusion to believe that political problems can be settled by war, or that peace can be achieved by a balance of rockets. Peace is in the mind of man, and unless man examines his head and learns to resolve his differences with his fellow man without violence, no bomb will be a 'bomb of peace.'"[7]

Kelen did not start publishing subversive, piercing political fables until he resigned from his post at the United Nations in 1956. Although he wrote his parody *Platypus at Large: A Nonsense Book of World Politics* as early as 1946, it took more than fourteen years for him to find a publisher. He had been inspired to use a platypus as the major protagonist of his story when the Bronx Zoo acquired two of the animals. Setting pen and pencil to paper, he created the peace-loving Duckbill Platypus, who becomes totally bewildered when he decides to explore the Political Jungle to grasp why he

could not live the harmonious life he desired. The narrative begins like a satirical fairy tale:

> Once upon a time in a burrow beside a far-off river there lived a peace-loving animal named Duckbill Platypus. He had no fangs, claws, talons, tusks or antlers. His only weapon was a pair of spurs which he used for courting purposes only. He was a well-rounded little chap. His young came forth in eggs, like those of birds. His habits were aquatic, like fish. And he was a smallish, warm-blooded mammal like you and me. For the most part he was silent. But every so often, in the voting season, his voice was heard, proving that when given a chance, he was capable of saying *Yes* or *No*. All Platypus wanted on this earth was a little home, a little wife, a couple of eggs, a possible dream and an impossible one, and a Sunday picnic in the park with maybe a portable radio at his side.[8]

Duckbill Platypus is similar to Tolkien's hobbit and other small protagonists of fairy tales, who prove that they are more talented and virtuous than they seem. In this case, Duckbill is not selected for a mission like the hobbit was in *Lord of the Rings*. Rather, he is concerned that his world is falling apart, and decides to leave home and head for the heart of the Political Jungle so he can sort things out. He is convinced that he can clear his head and grasp why the world is so chaotic. At the entrance to the Jungle, he meets the cynical Max Fox, who tells him: "I'll show you the wonderama of politics. I'll introduce you to the Parrots of the party line, the Leeches on the body politic, the Society Lions, the Sacred Cows, the Fat Cats, the Blind Mice leading the Moles to a place in the sun."[9] Indeed, Max Fox keeps his word and takes Duckbill through diverse regions of the Jungle, where there are debates and descriptions of disarmament, the art of diplomacy, speechmaking, space travel, experts, bureaucrats, espionage, the media, and the united vertebrates. In each of these regions, Kelen draws unforgettable animals in ink, animals dressed like humans in action, generally exposing their contradictions. Along the way, Max Fox explains

how mighty nations and musclemen use their power to prevent the masses from benefiting from their hard work. Despite the ironic and satirical drawings of the different types of animals that poke fun at humans, Kelen ends the book on a hopeful note. This "manifesto" is worth quoting in full because it addresses key issues in politics today:

> "Why should a mighty nation have a lower moral standard than its humblest citizen? Why can't nations willingly give up some part of their pride and power, and glory, accept discipline and their fair share of responsibility toward one another, as we individuals do? They might lose some splendor, but they would gain survival!
>
> "If we the people, among ourselves, behaved as nations do, we'd be dead Ducks by now.
>
> "World problems are no different from those of any one Horse town where the denizens decide to live in peace, and a crime committed to the barn is not the internal affair of its owner.
>
> "We don't want mere co-existence. We want co-operation in building a world where morality is indivisible, a world in which everybody, everywhere is responsible for everything.
>
> "You see, Max Fox, when the smallest creature suffers an unjust death, we all die a little!"[10]

Despite his disappointment, especially in the United Nations, which was not able to fulfill its mission as he thought it should, Kelen remained an ironic idealist. Just two years after publishing *Platypus at Large*, he published a children's book called *The Valley of Trust* (1962) to support the United Nations. Once again Kelen designed fascinating animals living in a beautiful valley. Duckbill has married and has two children, Ducky and Billy, and an adopted baby duck, named UNICEF. They are content but there is always discord in the valley, and Max Fox once again denies that animals that live like humans can coexist in peace. A massive hurricane suddenly hits the valley and causes great devastation and despair.

After two days, to the surprise of Max Fox and Duckbill, all the animals join together to rebuild the valley. Kelen concludes his story by relating:

> The dwellers in the valley had learned another important lesson: that peace is a tender flower. It isn't enough to plant the seed. It must be protected and tended, too. Unless they worked hard for it—every one of them, every single day and all together—the flower of peace would wither away.
>
> So the animals had regular meetings and worked out their differences patiently, listening carefully to what each had to say. They agreed to work for a world where everyone would have enough to eat, a chance to work, and time to play. . . .
>
> "We want a world," said Platypus, "where every deer and every duck, every leopard and every lamb, every pigeon and pewee, every salmon and every sprat can be happy in his own way."
>
> When the animals found out that peace could be permanent, and there need never be war anymore, they voted to give their valley a new name. They called it the Valley of Trust.[11]

In contrast to his other books for adults, Kelen's caricatures and text in *The Valley of Trust* are somewhat didactic. Nevertheless, the work formed part of his commitment to violent pacifism, a paradox that provided the impetus for his drawing, writing, teaching, and reporting. An immigrant to the United States, Kelen endeavored to make America his home by fighting for peace. He lost numerous relatives and friends in the Holocaust and considered himself fortunate to have escaped. His response to fascism was a sane approach in an insane world. The world remains insane, and it is thus all the more important that Kelen's work should not be forgotten.

13

The Actuality of Gianni Rodari

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Gianni Rodari on the cover of the Italian magazine *Il Calendario del Popolo*, June 2007.

WALK INTO ANY BOOKSTORE in Italy, big or small, that has a children's section and you will find nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poems, plays, novels, novellas, and essays by Gianni Rodari, the most famous twentieth-century writer for children in the country.

Rodari was prolific as well as provocative. Why have his works been neglected in English-speaking countries? Because he was a communist? Is his humor too wacky and ironic? Is he too difficult to translate? Time will tell, if there will be a time to tell. For now, I focus on his theory of storytelling, socialization, and education, which he fully developed in *Grammatica della fantasia* (*The Grammar of Fantasy*), one of his most significant works,[1] translated into several different European languages. Rodari's other theoretical writings are still just as current and I draw on them because they need more attention in the world at large if we want to rescue our children from the commodified and politicized educational systems that haunt the globe.

In February of 1979, a little more than a year before his death, Rodari spent three days in the city of Ascoli Piceno, located a few hours' drive northeast of Rome, near the Adriatic coast. While he was there, he gave two public lectures, read from his works, created stories with children in two classrooms at different elementary schools, and witnessed a traditional Carnival celebration. Rodari's visit to Ascoli Piceno was a significant event for all concerned, and twenty years later, in 2000, the city honored him on the anniversary of his death by publishing *Rodare La Fantasia con Rodari ad Ascoli*, which contains important materials, documents, and interviews that had not been available until some ten years after his death.[2] The two talks, "Il linguaggio delle immagini e . . ." (The Language of Images and . . .) and "Scuola materna e scuola elementare: Due realità a confronto" (Preschool and Elementary School: Two Realities to Compare and Contrast), delivered when he was at the height of his powers, represent the culmination of much of his thinking about storytelling, the imagination, and education.

The first talk, "The Language of Images and . . . ," must have stunned his audience somewhat because he began with the premise that all who write for children must realize that the primacy of the book in education, if it ever existed, has ended. Rodari maintained that long before people became concerned about the rise

of the internet, and certainly during the flowering of television, the major influence on children—and all people—was mass media. Rodari did not rant against television or the cinema, however. His position was more sophisticated, as he spoke of children as active producers who have the capacity to make new things out of what they absorb. He argued that TV and cinematic images and their storylines are not harmful as long as children are stimulated to play with the images and pictures they receive and appropriate them for their own purposes.

What mattered most for Rodari was that adults recognize and realize what children are imbibing through mass media and acknowledge it as a starting point. Though there are dubious messages and bizarre forms in mass culture, there are also stories that resemble old folk tales. Comics, mysteries, romances, adventure, and horror films, provide children with material that they can take over and make their own so they can work through their fears and anxieties, whatever their environment and world might be.

Much of what we dismiss as cheap, trivial, or mass literature has qualities that we overlook, and Rodari asked:

> Why don't we take a little step forward and accept science fiction and horror stories for what they are? Children are quick to enter their mechanism and read them freely on their own. Why do we continue to distinguish between cultured and uncultured literature, between the cultural message and fourth-class message? After we take into consideration all the determining factors, the quality of the message is not important but the reader and the spectator are.[3]

In particular, children need things that connect them to their real situation. With a certain irony yet very seriously, Rodari explained that this is why he did not write poetry but rather nursery rhymes (*filastrocche*). "They are toys of words similar to those of wood, plastic, or metal. Even if they are placed inside something. In short, I consider myself a toymaker and find that this definition of my work is the one that satisfies me the most."[4]

As toymaker, Rodari wanted children to be able to play freely with his "toys" and to experiment with them, to invent new toys and stories. In order to do this, children need to create their own appropriate setting and atmosphere. Therefore, he concluded his talk by discussing the relationship between the school, the child, and literature, and stressed that he does not have a recipe to bring about "better reading" because reading is not natural. It must be connected to a child's experiences. Indeed, he emphasized that moments of learning technical skills must be transformed into live or lively moments. They cannot be obligatory exercises.

> Let us free the book and notebook from the cold, arid, and punitive nature of the exercise. The school is not a place of punishment for children, even if the academic buildings frequently resemble prisons. . . . It is necessary to give children other spaces that render their lives more pleasurable. Instead we still have the customary auditoriums, the customary desks, the customary closets without toys. Let us not blame television and the comics. The blame can be placed on many things together.[5]

Rodari's second talk, "Preschool and Elementary School: Two Realities to Compare and Contrast," delivered two days later, addressed very specific problems in Italy at that time—the separate nature and realities of the preschool and the elementary school, a division that may still be noted even today in Italy and America. Rodari began by making some general observations about public education in Italy and remarked that the system itself has always been geared to provide the masses with basic tools of reading, writing, and arithmetic while selecting an elite core of students to study at a higher level after age sixteen. In this scheme, there has been a rigid approach to education: reading-interrogation-evaluation, three words that have dominated education—what we today might call teaching for standardized tests and achievement for achievement's sake. However, Rodari pointed out that

> there are also three magical words whose importance we should not underestimate: *animation*, *creativity*, *research*. Three

> beautiful words that should not be placed on a pulpit in schools; rather, we should set them down among the children to spark their desire to learn and we should search with them to learn how to be animators of a collective research. We should not explain things to the youngsters but place them under appropriate conditions so that they can discover by themselves. There is no need to explain the rule to measure circumferences. This is the ABC of creativity, usually spoken about only when children invent stories. However, it is a dimension that cuts across teaching.[6]

In the remainder of his talk, Rodari demonstrated briefly how animation, creativity, and research can link the preschool and the elementary school despite differences of emphasis. For instance, there is no reason why play cannot be used to stimulate learning in both environments. It is through play that children discover that they are producers of knowledge and not simply consumers. Rodari had doubts about teaching children to handle and comprehend complex toys such as electric gadgets (for instance, computers) at a young age. Instead, he preferred that children fabricate their own, or that the teacher use ready-made toys only if the children express the desire to use and understand them. Indeed, toys can also serve practical learning goals such as linking trains, buses, and cars to maps and studying geography as these vehicles travel through a city or a country. For Rodari, play does not involve competition and winning but experimentation with others to discover and test one's talents and to make meaning out of the surrounding world and thereby overcome anxieties. It is through play and inventing *meaningful* stories that children learn to narrate/navigate the world.

This process is not linear, nor can it be predicated on fixed knowledge of how children grow. Rodari remarked that when he went to school in the 1920s, he was expected to be obedient and silent, and his teacher did not know who he was. In 1979, Rodari noted, children and parents expected more from teachers and the school. Individuality and individualism are important in school systems that have become more democratic, but the focus on

individual learning and individualism has also brought huge problems not only between the teacher and students, but between children and their parents. One of the expectations that results from such emphasis on individualism and achievement is a notion of "after" (*dopo*)—education is preparation for something that comes after. Rodari found this notion troublesome. He proposed that we work with children where they are, in their present situation, instead of focusing on what they have ahead of them. Learning can best be accomplished when the needs and rhythms of the children are grasped and acknowledged. This also means that conversation should be a priority so that children communicate freely among one another in all modes of playing and learning. Learning how to talk and use words in diverse social situations is the first step toward free expression. This learning process can be coordinated between schools as children move on and ultimately are respected as individual people with their own stories.

Rodari's two talks and entire body of work hold that children (and adults) are constantly writing and telling their own stories in an effort to know themselves and their worlds, but that the prescribed conventions of learning hinder this cognitive process. To know the world is a project that children must conceive by themselves and with others. This is one of the primary principles of the Reggio Emilia school of thinking. Rodari was influenced by and influenced the work of Reggio Emilia. In an interview with Lella Gandini, Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia program, remarked, "Around 1965 our schools had gained two fabulous friends. The first was Gianni Rodari, a poet, writer of widely translated stories for children who dedicated his most famous book, *Grammatica della fantasia* (*The Grammar of Fantasy*, 1973) to our city and its children."[7] A statement by Malaguzzi in this interview reflects the philosophy shared by Rodari and the Reggio Emilia Program:

> In any context, children do not wait to pose questions to themselves and form strategies of thought, or principles, or feelings.

> Always and everywhere children take an active role in the construction and acquisition of learning and understanding. . . . So it is that in many situations, especially when one sets up challenges, children show us they know how to walk along the path to understanding. Once children are helped to perceive themselves as authors, or inventors, once they are helped to discover the pleasure of inquiry, their motivation and interest explode. They come to expect discrepancies and surprises. As educators we have to recognize their tension, partly because, with a minimum of introspection, we find the same within ourselves (unless the vital appeal of novelty and puzzlement has faded or died).[8]

Aside from the mutual philosophical and political perspectives of Rodari and Reggio Emilia, there are some shared practical aspects that Rodari addressed in his Ascoli talks:

1) The role of the educator as animator—The teacher does not come with preconceived ideas and impose them on the child but begins all work with the child at the point where the child is. This "work" can be transformed into play if we view children as producers of culture who appropriate the world around them and seek to change objects or use objects according to their needs and desires. The role of the teacher is to find a point of contact with children and animate their desire to learn about themselves and their surrounding world.
2) Learning can be accomplished through individual and collective play. Though the educator is prepared to teach skills such as reading, writing, math, music, etc., there is no set recipe to teaching. There are phases and rhythms that each child experiences, and the teacher must try to grasp them and respond to them and nurture the talents of each child.
3) Part of learning is a transformational experience. Relations are constantly transformed through interaction, and so is

the environment. It is important to create and re-create an environment for learning that suits the needs and pleasure of the children.

4) Animating children to invent new stories with the objects in their immediate environment is an important facet of teaching. It does not matter what children read, nor does it matter if they are immersed in all kinds of mass culture that adults consider harmful for the growth and education of children. What matters is the approach to culture in general—that is, how we animate children so that they will think creatively and critically about their worlds so that they can responsibly take charge of them.

Opening doors allows for building bridges and keeping access to these bridges open. Ideas still flowi between Rodari and Reggio Emilia, as seen at Ascoli Piceno, where Rodari's work has been kept alive. Indeed, the ideas and methods of Reggio Emilia and Rodari have been flourishing in Italy and the United States for the past thirty years and have formed the basis of the Neighborhood Bridges project in Minneapolis.

The idea for Neighborhood Bridges was conceived in the fall of 1997 when Herb Kohl, an innovative and progressive educator in the US, informed me that he might be able to provide funds for a storytelling/creative drama project in the Minneapolis public schools through George Soros's Open Society Foundation if I could submit a viable proposal within a month. Immediately, I contacted the artistic director of the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, who had expressed a desire to collaborate on a project. We met and worked intensively on a program based on my book *Creative Storytelling* and some storytelling experiments that I had been conducting with teachers in Minneapolis for three years. My goal was to set up a year-round program with storytellers meeting two separate classes in two different elementary schools for two hours a week. These two classes would establish contact with one another during the course of the year, and in

May, after exploring different genres of storytelling and improvisation for the theater, they would present a play that they designed from their own storytelling and creative dramatic work to their own school and parents, then travel to the partner school, perform there, and finally join the other class in a festival at the children's theater itself. In other words, there would be three productions that would create bridges within the school, community, and theater, with children, teachers, actors, relatives, and parents. The simple purpose of the program was to transform children into storytellers of their own lives.

From 1998 to 2020, the Neighborhood Bridges program has expanded to include eighteen schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul and several others elsewhere in the United States. In fact, we received a federal grant to disseminate the program through workshops held in twelve different cities. After my retirement from the program in 2008, the program kept changing and expanding under the leadership of Maria Asp and Kiyoko Sims, who created a preschool version of Bridges. Throughout all our work, Rodari and Reggio Emilia have been "actualized," and I would like to discuss some of their methods, techniques, and ideas that I tried to incorporate in the Neighborhood Bridges program. In addition, I want to show how our work is different and distinguishes itself under different conditions in Minneapolis. After all, we would be doing Malaguzzi and Rodari a disservice if we were slavishly to copy their work and not use and critique it in a dialectical manner. Bearing this in mind, let me present some basic assumptions that underlie our work:

1) Unlike Rodari, we believe that much more harm has been done to children by mass media in all its forms (from news broadcasts and cartoons to violent and sexually prurient spectacles), and we view our creative work in part as a means to offset this influence. We do not, however, dismiss or denigrate popular culture. We try to use it against itself by exposing contradictions. Nor do we

believe that mass media is the cause of all the problems that children are facing in the United States. We try to draw sociocultural connections in the current political context. If life is essentially political—that is, about inequalities and the struggle for power—then we want to help children understand the forces that are acting on them—at home, in school, on the streets. We do not offer solutions or resolutions, but alternative ways of thinking and acting.

2) Since we are not with the children all the time, we try to take a modest view of what we can accomplish in our year-long program. We know that we cannot change their lives, and we do not want to play the role of therapist. We want to engage teachers and children to animate them, to set them on a path of self-discovery, to provide skills, to strengthen self-confidence. Without their desire and will, we cannot accomplish our goals. In the process, we learn as much about ourselves and capabilities as they do.

3) Though we have focused on the elementary school, our work is not limited to a specific grade, level, or school. The techniques that we use to animate and to focus on storytelling as a means to enable people to become storytellers of their lives are flexible and can be used with children, students, and adults in preschools, high schools, universities, and other institutions. But let me stress that we do not believe in one-time workshops, seminars, or performances. They can perhaps be useful. Primarily, we seek to build community, which means that our work is long-term, and that we are concerned about involving children, parents, teachers, administrators, actors/educators, and friends in a creative process that at times may even test the conception and self-conception of the institutions within which we work. Our emphasis is on social and individual transformation and building bridges between people and communities through creative play.

There are three aspects that I should like to discuss in relation to ideas and methods developed by Rodari and Reggio Emilia: collaboration, transformation, creative and critical literacy.

Collaboration

From the beginning, there was—and still is—a danger that we would enter a classroom and impose our method and ideas on teachers and children. However, we have a slogan, borrowed from Bertolt Brecht, that keeps us fairly honest: we do our best to make ourselves dispensable. Only fearful individuals want to retain power by keeping knowledge to themselves. By not sharing knowledge, experts can pose as omniscient, whereas we want to show that we are all replaceable, different but replaceable, especially when it comes to sharing knowledge and skills. To this end, we make contact with all the schools, teachers, and administrators in the spring before we offer our program. We try to get to know the school environment and community to the best of our ability. We give out a printed syllabus for the year and discuss ways in which we can fit into the curriculum or how our program can be used to reinforce their teaching. We offer a summer workshop that all teachers can attend. We hold a one-hour preparatory meeting each week with the teachers in the school to discuss changes, problems, new ideas. Ironically, one of the major problems that we encountered pertains to a conflict between our curriculum and curriculum based on tests and state-mandated regulations. Teachers have found that our work makes the writing, reading, and learning that the children do more pleasurable and even more effective than the official programs. They do not have time to do the follow-up to our work during the week and are frustrated because they see contradictions between two pedagogical methods. They are under enormous pressure to prepare children to fulfill requirements while trying something innovative. Depending on the personalities and willingness of the teachers, we see different reactions. For instance,

one year all eleven teachers were fully committed to the program, but three expressed frustration because they do not have enough time to dedicate themselves to it.

The collaboration does not involve just the teachers, administrators, and actors/educators, but also the staff at the children's theater, the parents, and university students and professors. At certain stages of our work, their expertise is called upon, and their knowledge shared. In the spring, each class has the opportunity to bring in musicians, set designers, costume makers, or dancers to help the children learn about different arts and crafts. The celebrations of their plays in May cannot be accomplished without an entire community of people working together. In short, our final celebration of nine months' work with the children is a collaborative effort that expresses and articulates how the children see and imagine themselves in the world around them.

Transformation

The children in May are not the same children we meet in September. Obviously, they will have grown and changed because of all sorts of biological, psychological, and social factors. Viewed in light of our program, however, we can note individual and collective changes in varying degrees. We encourage and foster change in two primary ways: we are constantly changing the classroom environment and introducing the children to new environments; we use improvisation to change rules and regulations and to shift their expectations and audience expectations. Each session that we conduct is held within the school classroom, which we keep changing. For instance, after an initial game of the fantastic binominal that involves movement by the actor/educator, writing, and sharing of stories by the children in front of the other children, the chairs and tables are pushed to the side so that we have free space to create whatever environment we want. The children recognize that the classroom, which will often display their artwork, can be changed to their liking, and they will use found objects to create

their plays and become something other than they normally are, just as the children will become other than what they think they are. Environmental change leads to personal change. Just as our initial game with the fantastic binominal animates the children to conceive stories in which two haphazard elements can be brought together through their imagination to form a story, their story, so our emphasis on movement and taking over terrain in the classroom for storytelling, discussion, games, rehearsal, and performance can lead to an understanding of how appropriation can work.

As much as possible, we want to suggest to the children (and the teachers) that appropriation can enable expression of their desires and needs. We model change. We take risks. We show that we are not afraid to take risks even when we may make blunders. We adapt to constantly changing conditions in the classroom and in the school. We respond to parents who may not want their children to participate in our games for religious reasons. We try to show how change may be linked to tolerance, and we form three groups of children within the classroom who stay together throughout the year. We hope that the formation of these groups will enable them to build their own little community and to cooperate with one another. We try to foster respect and understanding among the three groups that we have formed. In the end, they will join into one large community to produce a play for other classes and schools.

With our emphasis on transformation, we have witnessed shy children stepping into spaces that they had never entered before and fulfilling themselves. We have seen children who are unwilling to work with the teachers, to read and write during the week, join with us to act, read, write, and express themselves as freely as they want. We have seen children conceive art, writing, and dramatic projects that represent changes they have been undergoing and reveal how much they are discovering about themselves and the world around them. Finally, we note changes in the teachers and ourselves—how much more sensitive we become to the children's

needs and our own and how we use conversation to do problem solving and to create projects that build on our social awareness and creative designs.

Creative and Critical Literacy

Our program is an explicit critique of functional literacy and how schools and politicians hinder learning by instituting programs that allegedly teach kids the basics and test their rote skills. In one of Rodari's talks, he pointed out that until the twentieth century most people did not know how to read and write, and yet they were able to solve problems and build great things. The oral form of transmitting and sharing knowledge was sufficient and in many cases still is sufficient for sparking an imagination and inspiring people to think critically about their circumstances. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that reading and writing have become more important skills in our advanced technological society, and can enable children to gain more meaningful pleasure out of life and to structure their existence in manifold ways. I am not talking about learning how to read and write to function better within society and survive. I am talking about learning how to read and write so that children can better grasp who they are, why they are in a particular situation, and how they can discover their talents to develop and assume different roles in life. Without the requisite oral, literary, and dramatic skills, it is difficult to project oneself into the world and to narrate one's own life. Therefore, we use some of Rodari's ideas in four phases of our session that explore how speaking, acting, writing, reading, and drawing can enable the children to articulate their present position in the world around them.

Each session begins with a version of Rodari's fantastic binominal game.[9] The teaching artist asks the children for two nouns, such as "ice cream" and "dog," that are placed on the board. Then the children volunteer numerous prepositions, such as "in," "on," "under," "through," "with," and so on. The teaching artist asks them

to choose which preposition to use and how. In one instance, I was asked to tell a story about the ice cream on the dog, which I did by improvising with the help of the children. After narrating this story with two arbitrary chosen nouns, I ask two children to come to the board and write two new nouns on the board. After they reveal the nouns, I "challenge" all the children to write a story using the two nouns connected by a preposition already listed on the board. They have about five minutes to write the story and draw a picture if they so desire. Once five minutes have passed, I ask them to stop writing and tell them that it is not important whether they have finished the story. Then four or five volunteers are asked to come up to share their stories. Before they read their tales to the rest of the class, they read them silently to themselves. Then each one steps forward to read. After the reading, I generally have each child put the sheet of paper on the ground and retell the story in his or her own words.

Each session during the nine months begins with a fantastic binominal game, and each time the fantastic binominal recital is altered. For instance, sometimes we ask the children to tell their tales in the first person or first-person plural, or in the voice of a news broadcaster. Sometimes we have groups of children writing a tale together. All their tales are placed in individual folders, and during the week, the teacher can work with them to hone their stories, change them, improve their style and grammar. One of these stories that they themselves choose will be published in the collective book that the children produce as early as December.

After the fantastic binominal game, the chairs and tables are pushed to the side, and a large circle is formed. Everyone, including the teacher and actor/educator, sits on the floor. At this point, the actor/educator or teacher will tell two stories based on the genre that we are introducing during a certain period of time. We work through the fairy tale, fable, legend, myth, tall tale, family tale, science fiction, popular super-hero tale, and utopian tale. We generally begin with the fairy tale and stay with it for three to four sessions. Our purpose is to expose the children to a classical or

well-known tale, representative of the genre, and then to counter it with another version to demonstrate how the form and contents of the tale can be changed. We ask the children to remember the tales as best they can because we want two out of the three groups in the class to act them out. The third group is asked to take chairs and form a straight line. The educator/actor will then begin a story with two or three lines that recall the traditional tale told that morning but alters it. For instance, there was once a drunk computer operator who boasted to his boss that his daughter could produce gold with her computer. The first student is to repeat these lines in his or her own words, then add a line or two, and pass this portion of the story on to his/her neighbor. The next student repeats everything and adds on to the story until the final student must bring the story to some sort of close. Aside from demanding that the children pay attention and exercise their memories, they are also encouraged to give free rein to their imaginations and to play with narrative devices and forms.

In phase three, all three groups now have stories to enact, and before we divide up, we do some theater games to limber up and learn forms of improvisation. After five or ten minutes of creative drama, the three groups go off into three different spaces, decide by themselves who is to play which role, who might be the narrator/director of the play, and to rehearse. The discussions in groups often become intense, and the teacher and actor/educator must be alert and decide when to intervene and bring about conflict resolution. Once the children have rehearsed for several minutes, they are all asked to be seated as a large audience in front of an imaginary stage that the actor/educator forms with masking tape. Certain basic theater concepts, such as facing the audience, projecting one's voice, and audience respect for the performers, are introduced into each session. We also discuss violence on stage and touching. In fact, we state from the beginning that we prefer nonviolent plays and stories or plays and stories that bring about peaceful resolutions. Here we challenge students to see if they can create nonviolent narratives without imposing our will on them.

Once the plays have been performed, we move to our last phase, which is Rodari's writing game of "What if?" The children reassemble the chairs and tables and get out their pencils and paper. Using the representative story of the genre for that session, the actor/educator will place some "What if" questions as models on the board:

What if Rumpelstiltskin had been a handsome giant?
What if the miller's daughter had run away from home on a motorcycle?
What if the miller had never boasted about his daughter?

The children are asked to put several other "What if" questions that pertain to "Rumpelstiltskin" on the board and to choose one to form the basis of their stories. They have five to ten minutes to write their stories and illustrate them. Depending on the time, the children can share some of the stories at the very end, or they can share them at the beginning of the next session. Whatever the case, these stories, too, are placed in their folders and can be worked on in various ways during the week.

The principles of Rodari and Reggio Emilia are intricately woven into our Neighborhood Bridges program. Another thinker connected to our work in Minneapolis is Jerome Bruner, the cognitive psychologist, who had some influence on Rodari's *Grammar of Fantasy* and great interest in the work conducted at Reggio Emilia. Bruner has written important books about education and the value of storytelling for young children and adults. Two of them, *Acts of Meaning* (1990) and *The Culture of Education* (1996), reiterate some crucial notions of schooling, learning, and storytelling that tend to be negated in our misguided obsession to reform schools by improving test scores and achievements. Bruner writes:

I conceive of schools and preschools as serving a renewed function within our changing societies. This entails building school cultures that operate as mutual communities of learners,

> involved jointly in solving problems with all contributing to the process of educating one another. Such groups provide not only a locus for instruction, but a focus for identity and mutual work. Let these schools be a place for the praxis (rather than the proclamation) of cultural mutuality—which means an increase in the awareness that children have of what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why. The balance between individuality and group effectiveness gets worked out within the culture of the group; so too the balancing of ethnic or racial identities and the sense of the larger community of which they are part.[10]

Obviously, this is a Reggio Emilia principle that Bruner applies to the situation of education in America. Instead of emphasizing more drilling, testing, and competition in our schools, Bruner calls for mutual learning that depends on collaboration, cooperation, and participation because it also enables individuals to develop their talents more deeply and more fully. In addition, he discusses the narrative construal of reality and how important storytelling is for creating and re-creating culture:

> In effect, then, narrative reality links us to what is expected, what is legitimate, and what is customary. But there is a curious twist to this linkage. For the canonical linkage of narratively constructed realities risks creating boredom. So through language and literary invention, narrative seeks to hold its audience by "making the ordinary strange again." And so, while the creator of narrative realities links us to received conventions, he gains extraordinary cultural power by making us consider afresh what before we took for granted. And our way of construing narrative realities—our openness to hermeneutic skepticism—makes us all the more ready to go along with the storyteller's fresh version.[11]

Although not every writing act in the Neighborhood Bridges project generates a fresh vision of reality or of the genre the child

chooses, there is no doubt in my mind that most of the stories the children create challenge the ordinary manner in which most people view reality. The works they create do in fact make the ordinary seem strange, and their strange and fantastic images and words reveal their anxieties, dreams, and experiences. The stories demand close reading just as each child calls for close reading. Moreover, children are not only stimulating storytellers; they are risk-takers, and they are willing to build and cross bridges to discover other worlds. We adults, who are supervisors of the bridges, would do well to keep the traffic flowing back and forth and to encourage even more bridges—without tolls, of course, without toll.

Epilogue

UNFINISHED NOTES

BY NATURE the Muscleman is predatory, self-righteous, self-centered. Convinced of his superiority, he is incapable of self-criticism. Insight and reflection do not delay his actions, and in an adverse situation the first thing that comes into his mind is to solve the problem by force. . . . He seeks the friendship of others of his kind, but he often turns on his cronies. He can harbor vengeance for a long time. . . . I believe that one of the chief problems of our time is the taming of the International Muscleman. We must learn to recognize him by his looks, words, and deeds. Ultimately, we must outgrow our need and admiration for his reckless leadership. We have come to a stage in history when the whole world has to pay too tragic a price for the blunders of such men.

—EMERY KELEN, *PEACE IN THEIR TIME* (1963)

In collecting and publishing my recent essays, I want to demonstrate how and why highly talented writers and artists from the late nineteenth century up through 1950 used their art to provide insights into the reasons for the outbreak of two world wars, and to expose the fraud of the dominant social classes. In their storytelling, writing, and illustrating, they sought to bring about peace and protect truth. In many ways, I have tried to follow their example. All my short essays about their fairy-tale works were written before the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world, and

they are filled with hope. They were written before Russian soldiers devastated Ukraine and foreshadow the conflicts that threaten the possibility of attaining peace and truth and globally shared values.

It seems to me that fascism has reared its ugly head throughout the world, not just in Ukraine, and I wonder whether it is still possible to have faith in human beings, faith that we will embrace peace and justice rather than war. As Emery Kelen, who fought in World War I and later escaped the Nazis in 1938 to live in America, suggests: there will never be peace and truth in the world until we use our heads, not bombs, to resolve our differences. Unfortunately, humans have embraced guns, not brains and compassion, to deal with authoritarians and their followers. What good is it, then, I ask myself, to spend my last years on this planet studying and publishing folk and fairy tales?

To tell the truth, I feel helpless and, at times, hopeless in both my personal and collective struggle against the depravity of fascists, who are also rooted in the country in which I was born. All this is ironic because I am a "disciple" of the pugnacious philosopher of hope, Ernst Bloch, whose wise words in *The Principle of Hope* have inspired a good deal of my writing and activism. I have also come to cherish the words of Albert Camus, who brilliantly showed in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* that the meaning of life can be determined only by our struggle to roll a rock up a hill, knowing that it will roll down again. So, I intend to keep resisting and rolling even though I know I shall never attain my goal.

Consequently, I'd like to share a story to end this book, for it might enable some readers to grapple with fascism and keep hope alive. Édouard Laboulaye's tale "Falsehood and Truth" depicts truth's current depressing condition, or should I say, *our* current condition. I have already discussed Laboulaye's remarkable tales, and I want to close with his disturbing parable to remind us that we cannot do without truth if there is to be hope for civilization.

Falsehood and Truth

In olden times, Falsehood and Truth resolved to live together like a pair of friends. Truth was a good person, simple, timid, and confident. Falsehood was a smooth talker, elegant and daring. One commanded, and the other always obeyed. Everything went well in such a friendly partnership.

One day Falsehood suggested to Truth that it would be well to plant a tree that would give them blossoms and flowers in spring, shade in summer, and fruit in autumn. Truth was pleased with the plan, and the tree was planted right away.

As soon as it began to grow, Falsehood said to Truth: "Sister, let us each choose a part of the tree. A community that is too close together breeds strife. Good accounts make for good friends. For example, there are the roots of the tree. They support and nourish it. They are sheltered from wind and weather. Why don't you take them? To oblige you, I will content myself, for my part, with the branches that grow in the open air, at the mercy of birds, beasts, and men, wind, heat, and frost. There's nothing that we would not do for those we love!"

Truth, confused by such goodness, thanked her comrade and burrowed underground, to the great joy of Falsehood, who found himself alone among people and was able to reign at his ease.

The tree grew fast, and its large branches spread shade and coolness far and wide, and it soon produced blossoms more radiant than the rose. Men and women hastened from all sides to admire the marvel. Perched upon the topmost branch, Falsehood called them and soon charmed them with his sweet words. He taught them that society is nothing but falsehood, and that men would be ready to tear each other to pieces if they always spoke the truth.

"There are three ways to succeed here below," he added, "by simple falsehood, as when the vassal says to his lord, 'I respect and love you'; by double falsehood, as when he exclaims, 'May

lightning strike me if I am not your most faithful servant'; and by triple falsehood, as when he repeats, 'My wealth, my arm, and my life all belong to my lord,' and then deserts his master at the moment of danger."

The good apostle gave these lessons in a cheerful manner and supported them with such fine examples that everyone who heard him was intoxicated by his words. They pointed to those who did not applaud and even began to suspect each other. For a hundred miles around, nobody talked about anything except Falsehood and his wisdom. Some thought he should be king. As to good Truth, who lay crouching in her den, no one gave her a thought. She might be dead and forgotten.

Abandoned as she was by everyone, she was forced to live on whatever she could find beneath the ground, while Falsehood was enthroned among green pastures and flowers. One day the poor mole gnawed the bitter roots of the tree that Truth had planted, and it gnawed them so deep that one day, when Falsehood, more eloquent than usual, was addressing a myriad crowd of people, the wind rose slightly, and suddenly blew down the tree, which no longer had any roots to support it. The branches in their fall crushed all who were beneath them.

Falsehood escaped with an injured eye and a broken leg, which left him lame and squinting. Once again, he was able to pull himself out of trouble lightly.

Now Truth was suddenly restored to light and rose from the ground with disheveled hair and a stern countenance and began harshly to rebuke the people around her for their weakness and credulity. No sooner did Falsehood hear her voice than Falsehood cried, "Look! There is the instigator of all our ills—the one who has nearly destroyed us! Death to her! Death to her!"

As soon as the people heard this, they armed themselves with sticks and stones and pursued the unfortunate woman. Once they caught her, they pushed her again into the hole, more dead than alive. After doing this, they quickly sealed it

with a large stone so that Truth might never more arise from her tomb.

However, she still had a few friends, for during the night an unknown hand carved the following epitaph upon the stone:

"Aqui yaze la Verdad,
A quien el mundo cruel
Mató sin enfermedad
Porque no reinase en el
Sino Mentira y Maldad."

Or,

"Here lies Truth, slain not by disease
but by the cruel world so that nothing might
reign in it but Falsehood and Disloyalty."

It is Falsehood's smallest fault not to suffer contradiction. So, the people searched for Truth's friend, and as soon as he was found, he was hanged. Only the dead don't complain.

To be more certain of his victory, Falsehood built himself a palace over the tomb of Truth. But it is said that sometimes she turns in her grave. When this happens, the palace crumbles like a house of cards and buries all the inhabitants beneath its ruins, both innocent and guilty.

But the people have other things to do than mourn their dead. They continue to fulfill their inheritance. Those eternal dupes rebuild the palaces each time more beautiful than the old ones, and Falsehood, lame and squinting, continues to reign there to this very day.[1]

NOTES

Chapter One. Unburying Buried Fairy Tales: Adventures of a Scholarly Scavenger

1. Jerome Bruner, *The Culture of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 147.

2. See Paul Armstrong, *Stories and the Brain: The Neuroscience of Narrative* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

3. Michael Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.

4. Ibid., 8.

5. Ibid., 150–51.

6. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 247.

7. William Little et al., eds., *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 1802.

8. See Jack Zipes, ed., *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (New York: Routledge, 1993). This revised edition contains a new introduction, prologue, epilogue, bibliography, and six additional oral and literary versions of "Little Red Riding Hood."

9. Jack Zipes, ed. and trans., *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days: Collected Utopian Tales* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). This edition contains three new tales and twenty new illustrations.

10. Ibid., 33–36.

11. See Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), 308–13.

12. See Pyotr Yershov, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, trans. Louis Zellikoff, illustr. Nikolai Kochergin (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1957).

13. Heywood Broun, *The Fifty-First Dragon*, illustr. Etienne Delessert (Mankato, MN: Creative Education, 1985), 7.

Chapter Two. Édouard Laboulaye's Political Fairy Tales

1. Laboulaye's significance as a politician is often recorded in histories of the Second Empire and Third Republic. On December 9, 2016, there was an entire colloquium, titled "Pensée juridique et politique d'Édouard Laboulaye (1811–1883)," dedicated to his work and influence at the Centre de Philosophie Juridique et Politique, Université de Cergy-Pontoise.

2. John Bigelow, *Some Recollections of the Late Édouard Laboulaye* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 17.

3. Published between 1789 and 1944, the *Journal des débats* played a leading role in influencing French culture and politics during Laboulaye's lifetime. In fact, Laboulaye contributed to this weekly not only his fairy tales but also his political essays, lectures, and book reviews.

4. Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 298.

5. Walter Gray, *Interpreting American Democracy in France: The Career of Édouard Laboulaye, 1811–1883* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 32.

6. Édouard Laboulaye, preface to *Contes allemands du temps passé*, trans. and ed. Félix Frank (Paris: Didier, 1869), vii.

7. The tale type is called "Best Friend, Worst Enemy," ATU 921B, and numerous variants can be found throughout the world. See Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 1:547.

8. Édouard René Lefebvre-Laboulaye, *Abdallah, or The Four-Leaved Shamrock*, trans. Mary K. Booth (Chicago: A. C. McClurg), 17.

9. Édouard Laboulaye, *Paris in America by Dr. René Lefebvre, Parisian*, trans. Mary K. Booth (New York: Charles Scribner, 1863), 355.

10. Ibid., 363–64.

11. Ibid., 364.

12. *The Spaniel-Prince*, trans. Mary E. Robinson (London: Simpkin, Marchall, 1895), 221.

13. Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 187–88.

14. Gretchen Schultz and Lewis Seifert, eds., *Fairy Tales for the Disillusioned: Enchanted Stories from the French Decadent Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), xx–xxi.

15. See Jon Arnason, *Icelandic Legends*, vol. 2, trans. George Powell and Eirikr Magmusson (London: Longmans, Green, 1866).

16. There are other similar tales that Laboulaye may have known, such as Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's "Le Dauphin" (The Dolphin) in *Suite des contes nouveaux ou des fées à la mode*, 1698), Christoph Martin Wieland's long poem "Pervonte" (1778–79),

and Jacob and Wiulhelm Grimm's "Hans Dumm" (Simple Hans) in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812).

17. Édouard Laboulaye, *Contes bleus* (Paris: Furne, Jouvet, 1863), 11.

Chapter Three. The Many Voices and Lives of Charles Godfrey Leland

1. *New York Tribune*, July 28, 1895, Box 371, Pennell-Whistler Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

2. Angela-Marie Varesano, "Charles Godfrey Leland: The Eccentric Folklorist" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1979), 44.

3. Charles Godfrey Leland, *Memoirs* (London: William Heinemann, 1893), 1:190.

4. This correspondence is largely in the Library of Congress, Washington DC.

5. "My father regarded me as a failure in life, or as a literary ne'er-do-well, destined never to achieve fortune or gain an état, and he was quite right. My war experience had made me reckless of life, and speculation was firing every heart." Leland, *Memoirs*, 2:76.

6. Charles G. Leland, *Hans Breitmann's Party with Other Ballads* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1868), 5. The best complete edition is *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), with an introduction by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, Leland's niece, and a preface by Leland.

7. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, introduction to *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), x–xi.

8. Leland, *Memoirs*, 2:407.

9. Varesano, "Charles Godfrey Leland," 94.

10. Charles Godfrey Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-Telling* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), ix.

11. See the recent reproduction, Charles Godfrey Leland, *The Book of One Hundred Riddles of the Fairy Bellaria*, ed. Jack Zipes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

12. See Thomas Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

13. Ibid., 89–108.

14. Ibid., 101.

15. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Charles Godfrey Leland: A Biography*, vol. 2 (Boston: Archibald Constable, 1896), 379.

16. Ibid., 309–10.

17. Charles Godfrey Leland, *Legends of Florence, Collected from the People and Retold* (London: David Nutt, 1895), vi.

18. See Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke, intro. Jan Ziolkowski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

19. Charles Godfrey Leland, *The Unpublished Legends of Virgil* (London: Elliot Stock, 1899), xiii.

20. See Charles G. Leland, *Aradia, or The Gospel of the Witches: A New Translation* by Mario Pazzaglini and Dina Pazzaglini with additional material by Chas Clifton, Robert Mathiesen and Robert Chartowich, foreword by Stewart Farrar (Blaine, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1998).

Chapter Four. Kurt Schwitters, Politics, and the Merz Fairy Tale

1. Quoted in Friedhelm Lach, *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne: DuMont, 1971), 140.

2. Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach, vol. 5, *Manifeste und kritische Prosa* (Cologne: DuMont, 1981), 187.

3. Jaleh Mansoor, "Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Desiring House," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 4 (2002): 3.

4. Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1920).

5. My remarks are primarily based on two excellent biographies, Ernst Nündel, *Kurt Schwitters* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981), and Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters: A Biographical Study* (Cardiff: University of Cardiff, 1997), and on the monograph by Friedhelm Lach, *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters*.

6. Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, 5:82–83.

7. Lach, *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters*, 24.

8. This poem was originally published in *Der Sturm* 10, no. 5 (August 1919): 72. It was republished and changed many times during Schwitters's life. The present translation is based on a version that Schwitters sent to Christof Spengemann that was published in *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach, vol. 1 (Cologne: DuMont, 1973), 58–59. The German text is as follows:

> An Anna Blume
>
> Oh Du, Geliebte, meiner 27 Sinne, ich liebe Dir!
> Du, Deiner, Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir,——wir?
> Das gehört beiläufig nicht hierher!
>
> Wer bist Du, ungezähltes Frauenzimmer, Du bist, bist Du?
> Die Leute sagen, Du wärest.
> Laß sie sagen, sie wissen nicht, wie der Kirchturm steht.
>
> Du trägst den Hut auf Deinen Füßen und wanderst auf die Hände,
> Auf den Händen wanderst Du.

Hallo, Deine roten Kleider, in weiße Falten zersägt,
Rot liebe ich Anna Blume, rot liebe ich Dir.
Du, Deiner, Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir,———- wir?
Das gehört beiläufig in die kalte Glut!
Anna Blume, rote Anna Blume, wie sagen die Leute?

Preisfrage:
1.) Anna Blume hat ein Vogel,
2.) Anna Blume ist rot.
3.) Welche Farbe hat der Vogel.

Blau ist die Farbe Deines gelben Haares,
Rot ist die Farbe Deines grünen Vogels.
Du schlichtes Mädchen im Alltagskleid,
Du liebes grünes Tier, ich liebe Dir!
Du Deiner Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir,——wir!
Das gehört beiläufig in die—- Glutenkiste.

Anna Blume, Anna, A——N——N——A!
Ich träufle Deinen Namen.
Dein Name tröpft wie weiches Rindertalg.
Weißt Du es Anna, weißt Du es schon,
Man kann Dich auch von hinten lesen.
Und Du, Dur Herrlichste von allen,
Du bist von hinten, wie von vorne:
A————N————N————A.
Rindertalg träufelt STREICHELN über meinen Rücken.
Anna Blume,
Du tropfes Tier,
Ich————liebe————Dir!

9. Kate Trauman Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 40.

10. See Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890–1937* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001); and Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

11. See Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*.

12. Lach, *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters*, 140.

13. Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, 5:144.

14. Ibid., 5:247–48.

15. Ibid., 5:293.

16. Patrizia McBride, "The Game of Meaning: Collage, Montage, and Parody in Kurt Schwitters's Merz," *Modernism/Modernity* 14, no. 2 (April 2007): 255.

17. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. and ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 118–19.

18. Ibid., 119.

Chapter Five. Béla Balázs, the Homeless Wanderer, or, The Man Who Sought to Become One with the World

1. Cited in Béla Balázs, *Der heilige Räuber und andere Märchen*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Berlin: Arsenal, 2005), 185.

2. Joseph Zsuffa, *Béla Balázs: The Man and the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), xi.

3. Petófi was a Hungarian of Slovak descent.

4. Quoted in Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 101.

5. Hanno Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2003), 10–11.

6. Béla Balázs, "Todesästhetik," trans. Anna Bak-Gara and Marina Gschmeidler, *Mitteilungen des Filmarchiv Austria* 2 (2004): 68–69.

7. In Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film,* 271.

8. Ferenc Féher, "Das Bündnis von Georg Lukács und Béla Balázs bis zur ungarischen Revolution," in *Die Seele und das Leben: Studien zum frühen Lukács*, ed. Agnes Heller et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 145.

9. See Aranka Ugrin and Kálmán Vargha, eds., *"Nyugat" und sein Kreis, 1908–1944* (Leipzig: Philip Reclam, 1989).

10. For two excellent studies of this friendship, see Féher, "Das Bündnis von Georg Lukács und Béla Balázs bis zur ungarischen Revolution," 131–76; and Julia Lenkei, "Béla Balázs and György Lukács: Their Contacts in Youth," in *Hungarian Studies on György Lukács*, ed. László Illés, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), 66–86.

11. For a thorough treatment of the opera, see Carl Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle: Music and Drama in Béla Bartók's Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

12. Féher, "Das Bündnis von Georg Lukács und Béla Balázs bis zur ungarischen Revolution," 165.

13. Béla Balázs, *Sieben Märchen* (Vienna: Rikola, 1921), 51.

14. Zsuffa, *Béla Balázs: The Man and the Artist*, 52–53.

15. For a full account of the Sunday Circle, see Éva Karádi and Erzsébet Vezér, eds., *Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim und der Sonntagskreis*, trans. Albrecht Friedrich (Frankfurt am Main: Sendler, 1985).

16. Georg Lukács, *Balázs Béla és akiknek nem kell* (Gyoma: Kner, 1918). This book has not been translated.

17. In Lenkei, "Béla Balázs and György Lukács," 76.

18. Quoted in Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, 103.

19. Mariette Lydis was actually an Austrian of Jewish descent. Her maiden name was Ronsperger, and she was born in Vienna in 1887. In 1927, she went to Paris, where she made a name for herself, and then emigrated to South America in 1940, where she died in Buenos Aires in 1970.

20. Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film*, 12–13.

21. See Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, 109–16.

22. See the discussions about this film in John Ralmon, "Béla Balázs in German Exile," *Film Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1977): 12–19; Zsuffa, *Béla Balázs: The Man and Artist*, 217–40; and Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film*, 352–78.

23. Zsuffa, *Béla Balázs: The Man and the Artist*, 297–98.

24. Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film*, 12.

25. Thomas Mann, "Ein schönes Buch," *Neue Freie Presse* (March 1, 1922).

26. In Lenkei, "Béla Balázs and György Lukács," 82.

27. Raymond Van Over, ed., *Taoist Tales* (New York: New American Library, 1973), 7–8.

28. In Lenkei, "Béla Balázs and György Lukács," 74.

29. Loewy, *Béla Balázs—Märchen, Ritual und Film*, 34. Loewy quotes extensively from Balázs's "The Aesthetics of Death" in this paragraph.

30. Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, 104.

Chapter Six. Christian Bärmann: The Delightful Artist Nobody Knows

1. For a short insightful study of his life and work with eighty images, see E. W. Bredt, *Christian Bärmann: Märchen und Bilder* (Munich: Hugo Schmidt Verlag, 1922).

2. See the English translation, Christian Bärmann, *The Giant Ohl and Tiny Tim*, trans. Jack Zipes (Minneapolis: Little Mole and Honey Bear, 2019).

3. Ibid., 22.

4. Ibid., 26.

Chapter Seven. Ernst Bloch and Mariette Lydis: The Art of Daydreaming

1. Quoted in Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, 103.

2. Ernst Bloch, "Dichtung und sozialistische Gegenstunde," in *Literarische Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 141.

3. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 79.

4. Eric Klinger, *Daydreaming: Using Waking Fantasy and Imagery for Self-Knowledge and Creativity* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1990), 112.

5. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1:88.

6. Ibid., 1:94.

7. Ibid.

8. See Jorge Luis Correa, *En busca de Mariette Lydis* (Buenos Aires: Sivori Museum, 2019).

9. See Henry de Montherlant, *Mariette Lydis* (Bobigny: Nouvelles Éditions Françaises, 1949).

10. See *Mariette Lydis: 39 reproductions en noir et 16 en couleur* (Buenos Aires: Viau, 1945), 9–10. This book includes an introduction, "Coupe à travers moi-même," by Lydis, pp. 9–18.

11. Ibid., 12–13.

12. Dusan Stulik and Art Kaplan, "Collotype," in *The Atlas of Analytical Signatures of Photographic Processes* (Los Angeles: Getty Institute, 2013), 4–5, 29.

13. Christian Maryska, "'Mon travail est mon refuge': The Painter and Book Illustrator Mariette Lydis—An Unknown Woman," in *The Better Half—Jewish Women Artists before 1938*, ed. Andrea Winklbauer and Sabine Fellner (Vienna: Jewish Museum, 2016), 184.

14. Montherlant, *Mariette Lydis*, 6.

15. *Mariette Lydis*, 13–14.

16. Correa, *En busca de Mariette Lydis*, 190.

17. Ibid., 186.

18. Mariette Lydis, *Le trèfle à quatre feuilles, ou La clef du bonheur* (Paris: G. Govone, 1935). See the dedication. Unpaginated.

Chapter Eight. Paul Vaillant-Couturier's War against War

1. Paul Valliant-Couturier, *Le malheur d'être jeune* (Paris: Les Éditions Nouvelles, 1935), 8.

2. See Paul Valliant-Couturier, *Johnny Breadless*, trans. and ed. Jack Zipes (Minneapolis: Little Mole and Honey Bear, 2020).

3. Paul Valliant-Couturier, "Ce que j'ai appris à la guerre," in *Vers des lendemains qui chantent* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1962), 162.

4. Mathilde Lévêque, *Écrire pour la jeunesse en France et en Allemagne dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 114.

Chapter Nine. Hermynia Zur Mühlen: The Red Countess and Her Revolutionary Vision

1. Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *The End and the Beginning: The Book of My Life*, ed. and trans. Lionel Gossman (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 20. For the original German, see *Ende und Anfang: Ein Lebensbuch* (Berlin: Fischer, 1929).

2. Ibid., 98.

3. Lynda King, "From the Crown to the Hammer and Sickle: The Life and Works of the Austrian Interwar Writer Hermynia Zur Mühlen," in *Women in German Yearbook* 4 (1988): 127. See also Ailsa Wallace, "Socialist Literature for Girls," in *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: The Guises of Socialist Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101–30.

4. Lionel Gossman, "Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen," in Zur Mühlen, *The End and the Beginning*, 286.

5. Ibid.

6. Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales*, ed. and trans. Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 171–72.

Chapter Eleven. Born to Be Killed: Bambi's Courage and Felix Salten's Dilemma

1. In Dietmar Grieser, "Ausgebootet," in *Im Tiergarten der Weltliteratur: Auf den Spuren von Kater Murr, Biene Maja, Bambi, Möwe Jonathan und den anderen* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1991), 23.

2. Beverley Driver Eddy, *Felix Salten: Man of Many Faces* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2010), 195.

3. Anna Wyler-Salten, ed., *Felix Salten's Favorite Animal Stories*, illustr. Fritz Eichenberg (New York: Julian Messner, 1948), vii.

4. Sabine Strümper-Krobb, "'I Particularly Recommend It to Sportsmen,' Bambi in America: The Rewriting of Felix Salten's *Bambi," Austrian Studies* 23 (2015): 131.

5. Ralph Lutts, "The Trouble with Bambi: Walt Disney's *Bambi* and the American Vision of Nature," *Forest and Conservation History* 36 (October 1992): 164.

6. See Jeffrey Veidlinger's superb study, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918–1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021).

7. David Edmonds, *The Murder of Professor Schlick: The Rise and Fall of the Vienna Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 117.

8. To name just a few, Nick Büscher, "Kulturökologie im Kinderzimmer. Bambi: Eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Wald—ein anthropofugales 'Kinderbuch'," in *Kulturökologie und Literaturdidaktik: Beiträge zur ökologioschen Heerausfoderung in Literatur und Unterricht*, ed. Siegelinde Grimm and Berbell Wanning (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 375–92; A. Waller Hastings, "Bambi and the Hunting Ethos," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 53–59; Ruth Reitan, "'Doe: A Deer, a Female Deer . . . ?': Counter-Reading Bambi as a Crypto Fascist Dream," *International Journal of Zizek Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 1–8; John Wills, "Felix Salten's Stories: The Portrayal of Nature in Bambi, Perri, and the Shaggy Dog," in *Walt Disney, from Reader to Storyteller: Essays on the Literary Inspirations*, ed. Jackson

Kathy Merlock, Mark West, Margaret King, and J. G. O'Boyle (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 45–61.

9. Grieser, "Ausgebootet," 16–32.

10. Ibid., 22.

11. Felix Salten, *The Original Bambi: The Story of a Life in the Forest*, ed. and trans. Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 150.

Chapter Twelve. Emery Kelen, the "Violent" Pacifist

1. Ernst Kretschmer (1888–1964), a German psychiatrist, established a classification of personality types. William Sheldon (1898–1977), an American psychologist, created the fields of somatotype and constitutional psychology that correlate body types with temperament.

2. Betty Kelen, "Derso and Kelen: A Memoir," 1, Box 1, Folder 1, Derso and Kelen Collection, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

3. Ibid., 3.

4. Box 5, Folder 3, Derso and Kelen Collection, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

5. Emery Kelen, *Peace in Their Time: Men Who Led Us In and Out of War, 1914–1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 443.

6. B. Kelen, "Derso and Kelen," 8.

7. Emery Kelen letter to friend Pasha, c. 1948, Derso and Kelen Collection, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

8. Emery Kelen, *Platypus at Large* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), 13.

9. Ibid., 17.

10. Ibid., 115.

11. Ibid., 49–50.

Chapter Thirteen. The Actuality of Gianni Rodari

1. *Grammatica della fantasia* was first published in 1973 in Turin by Einaudi. I published the first English translation as *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories* (New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1996). A revised edition is forthcoming from Enchanted Lion.

2. See Luciano Marucci and Anna Maria Novelli, eds., *Rodare La Fantasia con Rodari ad Ascoli* (Ascoli Piceno: Tipografia Fast Edit di Acquaviva Picena, 2000). The editors of this book are playing with Rodari's name in the title, implying that we must try to use our imaginations as Rodari would have.

3. Ibid., 37.

4. Ibid., 37–38.

5. Ibid., 42.

6. Ibid., 206.

7. Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman, eds., *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1993), 47.

8. Ibid., 60.

9. For a more thorough discussion of this program and its connection to Rodari, see my book *Speaking Out: Storytelling and Creative Drama for Children* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

10. Bruner, *The Culture of Education*, 81–82.

11. Ibid., 140.

Epilogue. Unfinished Notes

1. Édouard Laboulaye, "Falsehood and Truth," in *Smack-Bam, or The Art of Governing Men*, trans. and ed. Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 261–64.

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by Felix Salten, edited and translated by Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022); "Emery Kelen, the 'Violent' Pacifist," in *Yussuf the Ostrich* by Emery Kelen, edited by Jack Zipes (Minneapolis: The Lion and the Unicorn, 2020), 30–35; "The Actuality of Gianni Rodari," in *The Grammar of Fantasy* by Gianni Rodari, translated by Jack Zipes (New York: Enchanted Lion, forthcoming).

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